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Regional Oral History Office

Earl Warren Oral History Project

Oscar J. Jahnsen

ENFORCING THE LAW AGAINST

GAMBLING, BOOTLEGGING, GRAFT, FRAUD, AND SUBVERSION, 1922-1942

An Interview Conducted by
Alice King
and
Miriam Feingold Stein

Copy No. 1



Oscar J. Jahnsen

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PREFACE

The Earl Warren Oral History Project, a special project of the Regional Oral History Office, was inaugurated in 1969 to produce tape-recorded interviews with persons prominent in the arenas of politics, governmental administration, and criminal justice during the Warren Era in California. Focusing on the years 1925-1953, the interviews were designed not only to document the life of Chief Justice Warren but to gain new information on the social and political changes of a state in the throes of a depression, then a war, then a postwar boom.

An effort was made to document the most significant events and trends by interviews with key participants who spoke from diverse vantage points. Most were queried on the one or two topics in which they were primarily involved; a few interviewees with special continuity and breadth of experience were asked to discuss a multiplicity of subjects. While the cut-off date of the period studied was October 1953, Earl Warren's departure for the United States Supreme Court, there was no attempt to end an interview perfunctorily when the narrator's account had to go beyond that date in order to complete the topic.

The interviews have stimulated the deposit of Warreniana in the form of papers from friends, aides, and the opposition; government documents; old movie newsreels; video tapes; and photographs. This Earl Warren collection is being added to The Bancroft Library's extensive holdings on twentieth century California politics and history.

The project has been financed by four outright grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, a one year grant from the California State Legislature through the California Heritage Preservation Commission, and by gifts from local donors which were matched by the Endowment. Contributors include the former law clerks of Chief Justice Earl Warren, the Cortez Society, many long-time supporters of "the Chief," and friends and colleagues of some of the major memoirists in the project. The Roscoe and Margaret Oakes Foundation and the San Francisco Foundation have jointly sponsored the Northern California Negro Political History Series, a unit of the Earl Warren Project.

Particular thanks are due the Friends of The Bancroft Library who were instrumental in raising local funds for matching, who served as custodian for all such funds, and who then supplemented from their own treasury all local contributions on a one-dollar-for-every-three dollars basis.

The Regional Oral History Office was established to tape record autobiographical interviews with persons prominent in the history of California and the West. The Office is under the administrative supervision of James D. Hart, Director of The Bancroft Library.

Amelia R. Fry, Director
Earl Warren Oral History Project

Willa K. Baum, Department Head
Regional Oral History Office

30 June 1976
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(California, 1926-1953)

Interviews Completed - January 1977

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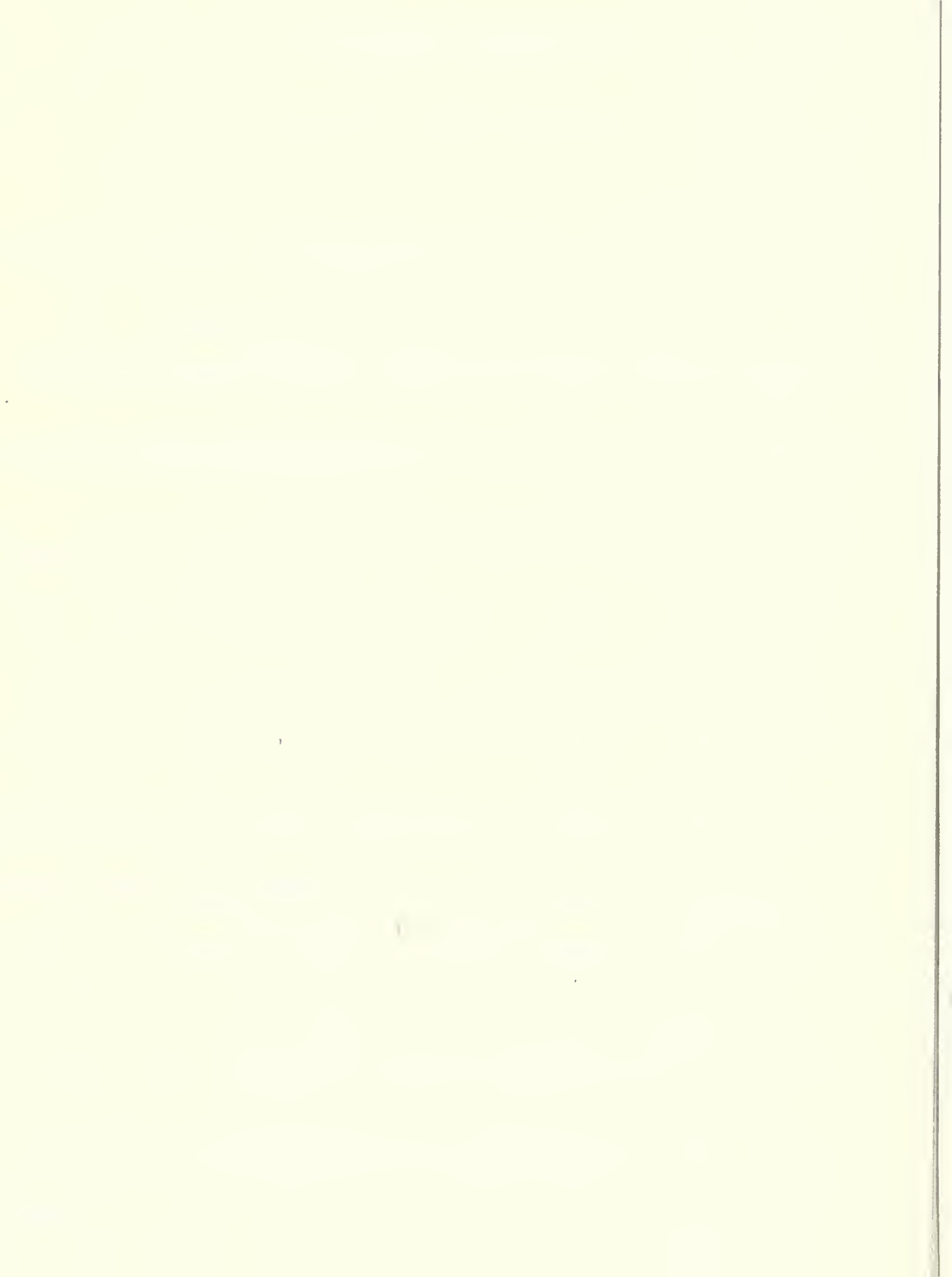
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Carey McWilliams, California's Olson-Warren Era: Migrants and Social Welfare.

Hunting and Fishing With Earl Warren. 1976.

Bartley Cavanaugh, A Mutual Interest in Government, Politics, and Sports.

INTERVIEW HISTORY

Oscar Jahnsen was interviewed by the Earl Warren Era Oral History Project in order to record his rich and colorful recollections of a career in law enforcement with Earl Warren in the Alameda County district attorney's office and the California attorney general's office.

Interviewers: Alice King and Miriam Stein

Conduct and Editing of the Interview

A series of four sessions, each lasting several hours, was held in the spring and summer of 1970 at Mr. Jahnsen's spacious home in Oakmont Village, an adult community on the outskirts of Santa Rosa.

A preliminary conversation, between Mr. Jahnsen and Mrs. King, to explain the purposes of the project, elicit Mr. Jahnsen's support, and outline the highlights of his career to guide future taping sessions, was held on March 19, 1970. Several months of research, primarily in newspaper clippings and the extant secondary literature on Earl Warren, followed.

Mrs. King returned to Oakmont to tape record Mr. Jahnsen on May 28, 1970, and again on July 2, 1970. On July 17, 1970 the final session was held, when Mrs. King was accompanied by a fellow interviewer for the Earl Warren Project, Miriam Stein.

All four sessions were conducted in the solarium, a sunny glass-enclosed room at the rear of the Jahnsen home, with a view of the Jahnsen's swimming pool and beach house, and the rolling Sonoma hills beyond. To prepare for the taping sessions, Mr. Jahnsen had briefly reviewed his collection of photographs and clippings and had them at hand during the interviews. He later loaned several photos to be copied by the Earl Warren Project, and they accompany this interview.

Displaying a remarkable memory (for minute facts as well as general impressions) and a gift for storytelling, Mr. Jahnsen reminisced freely about his long career in law enforcement. The skeleton of the interview

was a topical-chronological outline, and although it sometimes appeared that Mr. Jahnsen had wandered far afield from the subject at hand, as he described case after case he had investigated, he invariably maintained the thread of his earlier remarks, returning to the original subject with a comment that tied all the cases together.

Light editing of the transcript by Miriam Stein retained Mr. Jahnsen's ordering of events. The transcript was corrected for spelling and typographical errors and was sent to the narrator for review.

With the same care for detail and the same delight in a story well told, Mr. Jahnsen carefully reviewed and revised the transcript, correcting factual errors, adding explanatory remarks, and deleting unessential or inaccurate material.

The editing process was a long one. Mr. and Mrs. Jahnsen, enjoying their retirement years, took several extended trips and cruises. Then illness and a death in the family intervened. Mr. Jahnsen continued to work on his manuscript between hospital visits and while he cared for his convalescing wife. Her death in 1975 halted editing for a year. The final corrections were completed in the spring of 1976, when Mrs. Stein returned to Oakmont and assisted Mr. Jahnsen in his review. At that time his photograph collection was again reviewed, and several additional photos borrowed.

Narrative Account of the Interview

Mr. Jahnsen's story spans a century, and a wide range of experience, from his parents' childhoods in Norway and their experiences as immigrants, to his own upbringing in early twentieth century Oakland, to his years of enforcing the law against gamblers, bootleggers, vice, grafters, and subversives.

He begins by describing his parents' backgrounds. His father, a seaman and shipbuilder, was born in Norway, and emigrated to the United States as a teenager. His mother was also born in Norway, and through great personal effort and sacrifice managed also to emigrate, settling eventually in California. There the two elder Jahnsens met and married.

Educated in his father's ethic of hard work, the young Oscar began working at the age of twelve and a half. He richly describes his first jobs with a candy company, a lithography firm, and an Oakland grocery store.

His formal education ended with the eighth grade, augmented several years later by a general business school course.

In 1917, at the age of seventeen, Mr. Jahnsen joined the navy, where he first became acquainted with intelligence work. Later military service included the naval reserve and the National Guard, where he rose to the rank of major-general. A brief stint in private industry followed the navy years, but Mr. Jahnsen returned to investigative work, this time with the Oakland police department. The following year, 1922, he relates, he was appointed an agent of the Internal Revenue Service's Bureau of Prohibition.

As a Prohibition agent, tracking down bootleggers, rum runners, and smugglers, Mr. Jahnsen first became acquainted with Earl Warren, then vigorously enforcing the Prohibition laws as district attorney of Alameda County. District Attorney Warren provided Jahnsen and his colleagues with office space in the DA's suite of offices, and the two offices collaborated closely. Mr. Jahnsen describes Warren's efforts to uphold Prohibition and the standards of evidence then acceptable in state and federal courts.

Mr. Jahnsen paints a rich and vivid picture of the complicated politics in Alameda County in the 1920s and 1930s ("Well, this is a complicated thing, unless you were brought up with it, and then it's very simple."), describing the Mike Kelly machine and other Republican factions, the influence of the Ku Klux Klan, and the demise of Sheriff Frank Barnett, implicated in the gruesome murder of Bessie Ferguson. He related the series of events that made Earl Warren district attorney, and explains how Warren soon enlarged his investigative staff, which at that time was technically still a part of the sheriff's office.

Already familiar with the work of Mr. Jahnsen and Chester Flint, an Oakland police officer who was also active in enforcing Prohibition, District Attorney Warren soon brought them onto his staff as the first appointments. With deputy sheriff status, Mr. Jahnsen explains, inspectors assisted deputy district attorneys in developing cases, and investigated and enforced the law when local law enforcement agencies appeared reluctant to do so. Mr. Jahnsen's appointment was not without its adventures, and he describes how the intervention of a crooked bail bond broker, who was the source of earlier tips about deliveries of illicit liquor, almost lost him his job.

A description of Oakland's underhanded bail bond operation in the 1920s leads Mr. Jahnsen to the question of how Warren became the incorruptible official that he was. He comments on Warren's modest but solid upbringing, stressing Methias Warren's diligent saving and accumulation of property. It was in part related to that property, Mr. Jahnsen relates, that the elder

Warren was brutally murdered in 1935. In a subsequent interview session, Mr. Jahnsen relates in greater detail the intensive search for the murderer, his own guess as to the suspect's identity, but the ultimate failure to arrest anyone for the crime.

Warren, Mr. Jahnsen notes, was not only vigorous in enforcing the law, he was also fair, giving law breakers ample opportunity to mend their errant ways before arresting them if they refused to do so. Warren brought other reforms to the office as well, updating record keeping, organizing the staff into specialties, and coordinating the work of the office with other law enforcement bodies through such efforts as the Bay Counties Peace Officers Association, and mutual aid plans.

Turning to some of his more notorious cases, Mr. Jahnsen describes his adventures in capturing Fred Smith, a Ku Klux Klanner implicated in an Oakland street paving graft scandal that had created growing conflict between District Attorney Warren and Sheriff Burton Becker, and that had led ultimately to Becker's downfall. Smith, in the meantime, had fled to Los Angeles, adopted a pseudonym, and found a place for himself in the Los Angeles mayor's administration. With the help of several newspaper reporters and a n'er-do-well "sheet hustler", Mr. Jahnsen eventually located the elusive Smith and returned him to Oakland, where he gave a full confession.

On the subject of confessions and the treatment of suspects, Jahnsen stresses Warren's high standards: "[Confessions] had to be free and voluntary. Not free and voluntary from so many lashes or so many bats on the head, or a kick in the chest or something like that. No abuse at all." As illustrations he cites two fraud cases where, by applying psychology, he was able to persuade hitherto stubborn criminals to confess, without the use of violence or intimidation.

Jahnsen made similar use of "ordinary reasoning--letting the truth hear upon the mind of the individual" in his efforts to persuade Frank Conner and George Wallace voluntarily to confess their roles in the controversial shipboard murder case. Jahnsen vividly describes the cast of characters and his own role in the investigation of this murder case, in which several reputedly communistic San Francisco maritime union leaders were ultimately convicted of murdering a ship's officer considered to be anti-union. Jahnsen's recounting of how he laboriously laid wire under a room's length of carpeting in an effort to "bug" the room, only to have to rip it all out and repeat the process when his partner tripped over the wire and broke it, is a classic vignette in police practices.

Jumping ahead a few years to his service in the attorney general's office under Earl Warren, Jahnsen discusses the troublesome issue of the Japanese-American relocation during World War II. He describes the efforts



by county officials, acting on requests from the attorney general, to plot Japanese landholdings on county maps. From this and related evidence Warren concluded that the Japanese constituted a danger, and recommended to the Tolan Committee that they be removed. Jahnsen himself played a role in enforcing Executive Order 9066.

Returning to the district attorney years, Mr. Jahnsen discusses the office staff: its broad representation to reflect the diversity in the county's population, its various members, and its involvement in Warren's three campaigns for re-election.

In the final interview session, talk turns once more to the shipboard murder case, as an example of Warren's investigative techniques and standards of evidence. As further indication of Warren's high standards, Jahnsen returns to his account of the Methias Warren murder case; his own refusal to "bug" a jail cell to get evidence, and his refusal to tolerate "third degree" interrogation of a principal suspect which may have lost him a confession.

Mr. Jahnsen describes several additional cases in which he played a prominent investigative role: the sabotage bombing of the German freighter S.S. Vancouver shortly before World War II, the unmasking of two bunco operations involving the alleged creation of oil from street asphalt, a case of unprofessional conduct by a highway patrolman, and the operation of the kidnap squad and its role in foiling a San Quentin escape attempt in which the entire prison board was kidnaped.

In the concluding pages of the interview, Mr. Jahnsen discusses Earl Warren's tenure as California attorney general, summarizing the initial problems he and Warren faced in once again building up an investigative staff. He notes the growing feud between the attorney general and the then governor, Culbert Olson, which culminated in Warren's decision to seek and win the governorship in 1942.

Mr. Jahnsen's detailed and engaging stories shed ample light on both the techniques of criminal investigation in the 1920s and 1930s, and on his own high moral standards. "It only comes through contacts," he comments, describing how he was so successful in tracking down criminals. He later incorporated his extensive experience in a series of courses he taught in surveillance techniques.

In his extensive narrative, he reveals himself to be a deeply religious man, with no pity for bunco artists and other criminals who prey on the

innocent and often neglect their own families in the process. A family man and an active member of the Masons, he is an accurate reflection of the image Earl Warren sought to build in the Alameda County district attorney's office.

Miriam Feingold Stein
Interviewer/Editor

16 November 1976
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FAMILY AND PERSONAL HISTORY
(Interview 1, May 28, 1970)

King: You must have a host of stories to tell about the Warren era in California.

Jahnsen: Well, I was just going to say that if I told some of the stories that would come to my mind about Mr. Warren, you might say, "Who was this man Warren?" The question would be, "What made him so successful in everything that he did?" We have to go back many years, to give you my views of him.

It's my thinking based upon my association and experiences with Mr. Warren and his family for over thirty years. Those years were full of close relationships with Mr. Warren and with his wonderful family. I've thought back in my life many times what a privilege and what an opportunity it was to be able to become associated with him and his family.

King: Maybe you'll tell me how that happened?

Jahnsen: Yes. I was fortunate enough to have him select me to be a part of his team. This was not only a fortunate thing for me, but a happy experience, and in addition to that it's been a very rewarding experience.

When he first appointed me I was, you might say, an individual that was climbing on the lower rungs of life's ladder and reaching for the upper ones, and with very little background for it.

Family Background

King: I'd like to get something about your family background and yourself. You don't give yourself proper credit!

Jahnsen: Well, it isn't too much.

King: I'd like to ask you a little bit about your family, that is your family 'way back, coming to this country. Can we go into where your family came from, and where they settled in America and where you grew up?

Jahnsen: My father and mother are Norwegians. They were born in the old country, and I've had the pleasure of going back to their birthplaces. I have a lot of relatives back there and I've had the opportunity of viewing their homes, and where they were raised.

My father was the oldest of a large family. His father was a Swede, and his mother was a Norwegian. His father was a very worldly sort of a man. My father went to sea in his early life, a boy about eleven years old. It made it very hard on my grandmother, my father's mother, because the family was in need. My father had to go to work early and help support the family.

He went to sea on sailing ships, and finally he came over to this country. He was one of the first captains on this coast at twenty years of age.

In those days they didn't have what is known as a master license or what one would call a sea captain's license. They had what was known as a Marine Insurance License. If the marine insurance companies found a man qualified, then they would issue a Marine Insurance License and insure the vessel, the crew and cargo. I still have this license.

Then my father brought over his two brothers and a sister.

My mother was raised in Norway, not too far from where my father was raised. She came from a very fine family, and was considered as well educated as far as the educational standards went at that time. I would say that she had what compared to high school education. It would be more or less like a year or so of college.



Jahnsen: The old country custom was in those days that the girls would get married and have their own families, settle their own homes, and the boys would become heirs to the property, or the farms. There were two farms. My mother's brothers received these farms.

She came from a place called Tufta. They took the name of the place as the family name. In other words, if you wanted to locate the family and the place you would have to look for the farm name of Tufta. This was the name of the place and the name of the family.

My father came from a place called Hurum, near Drammen. It's hard to trace his family background.

My grandfather's name was Jahn Erickson, that is my father's father. My father being the oldest, his name was Edward or Edward John's son, or Edward Jahnsen. In Norway they use sen for son, and it would be J-a-h-n-s-e-n. So he was John's son Edward. So it would be Edward Johnson or Jahnsen.

He was confirmed as Edward Jahnsen in the Lutheran Church in Hurum and was naturalized as a U.S. citizen as Jahnsen. However, one of his brothers came over here and was naturalized as Jahnsen, but their children took the name of Johnson. The name Jahnsen was called Johnson, so they just took the name of Johnson. Those that went by the name of Johnson made people wonder why this first cousin of mine would be a Johnson and I would be a Jahnsen. The name means the same. There's been confusion in the family over this spelling of the name.

King: Did your mother meet your father in this country?

Jahnsen: Yes. She never knew him over there. My mother wasn't a very robust type of a person. She was small and thin, but was very wiry. I don't think she weighed over ninety-eight pounds. And she was about 5' 2" or 3", but a very strong-minded person of very strong will. She was very affectionate and very lovable. I couldn't have asked for a better father or a better mother.

When she wanted to leave the old country, her brothers didn't want her to go, because she was working for them for room and board. She did not receive much in the way of money. She had to be up in the mountains to milk the cows, make the

Jahnsen: cheese, bring it down to the lower part of the farm, and take care of the cattle. Over there it's a chore, because the cows and the cattle have to be washed and scrubbed. It had to be very well done and it was a lot of work.

The brothers said that she was sick and had TB, and couldn't come to this country. They made up all kinds of excuses to discourage her.

She made several unsuccessful attempts to leave Norway. At the time she left, she was living with an aunt on a farm called Hofsrud. This was a big farm and her auntie wasn't too well. She was staying there with her to help out on the farm. While she was there she heard that there were two girls, the Gowsen girls, who lived across the lake, and were going to America. There was another girl that was going to go with them, but she couldn't go because something developed to prevent her leaving although they had the tickets for her passage.

My mother, about eleven o'clock at night when she got the word that the other girl could not leave, she rowed a boat across the lake to the Gowsen farm. She rowed in the wintertime, in the snow and ice. She rowed over there to talk to the Gowsen girls about getting the extra ticket. She was not too well acquainted with them, but only knew who they were. She arranged to obtain this girl's ticket.

She had to borrow the money from this aunt. This meant that she had to do everything in a hurry as the ship was going to leave in a few days.

So, she had a trunk. It was a heavy thing, and how she got it loaded into this little boat and rowed back over in the ice and the snow and got over there, I'll never know. Then she had to walk up to the farm, so they came down with a wagon and took the trunk and her other belongings to the Gowsen place. The next morning they drove in to the depot and left by train, for the ship. Well, she didn't have any ticket for a berth, so she had to sleep on the deck of the vessel as an immigrant, until she arrived in New York.

King: She was a determined young woman.

Jahnsen: Yes. When she came to New York the other two Gowsen girls went to Boston, and there wasn't any too much communication after that.



Jahnsen: The Gowsen sisters later married two sea captains and finally settled back in Norway, in the same community. When I was there in '57 I visited this place and saw the pictures of these women and their husbands--they are now all dead. I talked to some of the family who verified some of this story, which was interesting to me, of course.

Following that, my mother went on from New York to Duluth, Minnesota, where she had the name and address of some Norwegian people that she could stay with. When she arrived there, she only had twenty cents, in American, in her pocketbook, and no more money. She lived with these people and worked as a house-girl.

Following this--it's rather coincidental--she met another family there in Duluth, a judge by the name of Lydell. Judge Lydell had, I think, three boys and a wife who wasn't very well, so my mother tended to her and helped her. They wanted to come out to the west coast, but she didn't. When she did come out, she located near the Lydells in Hayward.

It is a peculiar coincidence, as I say--one day when we were out driving my mother pointed out the Lydell place to me. It was on the road that runs from East 14th Street, up through Castro Valley on the old highway. This house later became a bootlegging establishment and a house of prostitution. While in the employ of the district attorney's office, I had raided that house many times and arrested the occupants for violations of the liquor and vice laws. Sixty years before, my mother used to be around there, when she was again in the employ of the Lydell family.

George Helms, who was captain of inspectors in the district attorney's office, lived a few miles from the Lydell place. The Helms' boys played with the Lydell's boys. Many years later George Helms became my immediate superior in the district attorney's office under Earl Warren. Of course he knew the Lydell family, having gone to school with the Lydell boys, and he and I had discussed this--what a small world it is.

When my mother showed me the house I said, 'Well, that's nothing but a bootlegging establishment and a house of prostitution!' Then I explained it to her and it was hard for her to believe this.

She also knew the old Soares family, whose son Joe later was chief criminal deputy in the Alameda County sheriff's office.



Jahnsen: They lived across the road from the Lydell place. I knew Joe very well.

Later she went to San Francisco and she became associated with a lot of the Norwegian people. The old country people would get together and through these meetings she met my father. My father had been married before, and he had two children, a son and a daughter. His first wife died and he married my mother.

My mother had two sons. My full brother died just four months after my father. In August 1916 my father died, and my brother the following December.

King: Was that the flu epidemic?

Jahnsen: No, it wasn't. He was a sea captain, in those days, and he was also a ship builder. Have you visited the Marines Memorial in San Francisco?

King: Oh, sure.

Jahnsen: Have you ever seen the Wapama down there, that steam schooner? It is one of the vessels that he designed and supervised its construction, and several others. They are lumber carriers. The Kalamath, the Multnomah, the Cililo, the Shoshone, the Yosemite, the Cascade, the Yellowstone, the S.A. Allard, the City of Portland, and others. He was the captain of the Samoa; he took that ship to Alaska in 1898 and 1899. One of those trips they towed a large flat barge, with a river steamer on the flat barge. This was the first river boat in the Yukon. He took it up there during the mining days, during the gold rush.

Of course, as I was saying, in those days there wasn't much pleasure for these fellows, only hard work--you might say there were wooden ships and iron men. [Laughter] My father came up the hard way. Most of the men were heavy drinkers. A lot of them sailed the good ship "Rock and Rye."

My father died while he was supervising the building of two vessels in Wilson Brothers Shipyard in Astoria. While he was in the pilot's office he had a stroke and died five days later. He had his first stroke in 1914, and a second in 1915 while taking out the first ship load of piling for the Pearl Harbor dry dock in Hawaii.



Education

King: While you lived at home you were in school at some point?

Jahnsen: I was born in West Oakland at 1661 11th Street. We moved to south Berkeley in 1905. I started at the Lincoln grammar school in Berkeley, and that was at King and Alcatraz Avenue.

In 1907 we moved to north Oakland and I went to the Washington grammar school which was torn down several years ago. That's at 61st and Shattuck. I went up to the eighth grade there.

My Dad made up his mind that I had to get through the eighth grade of that school. His idea was a high school education was not necessary unless you were going to be a professor or a lawyer, etc. Today high school is equivalent to an eighth grade education in those days.

My father said that if I wasn't through school by the time I was fifteen I was going to go around Cape Horn on a sailing ship--he was going to turn me over to a sea captain, a friend of his, like they used to do. That meant I had to climb aloft in the rigging, and I was going to be a sailor. He was going to make a sailor out of me. Every summer vacation I went to sea with my father wherever he went. Up and down the coast and out to the islands, and I had enough of all this sea life.

Early Work Experience

Jahnsen: I knew that I wasn't going to get out of grade school until I was pretty much in my fifteenth year, so I got a job working in a candy factory with Steele's Candy Company.

I was twelve and a half years old when I got this job in the candy factory. I used to go to work right after school, every day. We got out around 3:00 or 3:15, and at 3:30 I was at the store and factory.

They had a candy store, and a soda fountain and a lot of dishes to wash and clean, and in the rear of the store, in



Jahnson: south Berkeley, they had a big barn. In this barn they had big watering troughs, like horse watering troughs, and they had it set up with hot and cold running water. They had great, big boxes and these were stacked with dishes. The dishes lay there over night and they were just hard to clean. [Laughter] Mrs. Steele was a stickler, and every glass had to shine!

I was a sort of busboy, in a sense, but I was also learning the candy business.

You know, it isn't easy to get an ice cream soda glass shining. I used to have to soak them in the hot water, and I'd have a long brush in my hand, to get them clean. Dish towels galore hanging up there--flour sacks. If you get one that's new you couldn't dry anything with it anyway! [Laughter] I used to have to clean those glasses until they sparkled like a diamond.

They made their own ice cream. Those days they used to have to use cracked ice, and I used to have to keep the ice cream freezer going and repack the freezer and ice cream tubs. I had to clean all the dashers, the cans and everything--I wasn't big enough to, nor did I have the strength to lift these cans and tubs and repack the ice around them. It was a man's job.

In addition to this, if one glass didn't shine like a diamond back they all came from the store, and there was hundreds of them--the whole shooting match had to come back and be washed all over again, and then they had to be polished. Now Mrs. Steele was a stickler. She didn't want a glass up there with smears on it. She wanted every glass to look like the diamonds in a jewelry store window with all the lights on them.

I used to work every Saturday from seven o'clock in the morning, and never got through til midnight, and I used to have to walk home with a girl in the candy store. She did the locking up and she was afraid to go home alone late at night.

King: Was it a restaurant, as well as a candy factory?

Jahnsen: It was a candy store, and they served meals, lunches, and so forth.



King: They served food, but they also packaged candy for other places, and they made it?

Jahnsen: Oh, they made candy of all descriptions, the chocolate dippers were there, and they made Christmas candy and everything in the candy line.

King: Did they have any other outlets?

Jahnsen: They did later, but not then. They opened up a factory up on Webster Street. It used to be right near Ellsworth and Webster Streets. They had a big candy factory. But that's after I left.

I worked there for a year and a half as a boy--

King: How much did you earn, do you remember?

Jahnsen: Well on this I'll ask you a question--I was coming to that.
[Laughter]

At any rate, I started to work at 3:30 in the afternoon, and by the time I got through with the dishes it was around six o'clock. Then I had to go home for my dinner, and return and worked till 10 or 11 p.m. in the store or factory.

I used to help prepare everything for the chocolate dippers the night before. They arrived in the morning, and were there at eight o'clock, and I had to be in school. So I used to have to work sometimes until ten, eleven, twelve o'clock at night! Talk about the child labor law! There were no child labor laws in those days.

I had to clean the factory, I had to clean all the big slabs, the great big marble slabs, and they had a steel slab with a water jacket in it. I had to take all the scrap candy, sunburned chocolates or candy that didn't sell, throw it in the scrap, and then I had to clean the scrap by boiling it down. I used to have to strain all the scrap to get all the nuts, etc. out of it, the material which they could save and make over into chews, etc. So candy that was selling for about two-bits a pound, went into about a seventy-five cents a pound chocolate-dipped chew!

I wouldn't give that job up because I didn't want to go to sea. I had to work every Sunday. I was off, once in a while,



Jahnsen: from two to five. I had to get back at five o'clock, because the Steeles wanted to go out for dinner.

That meant I had to wait on the candy counter; I had to mix all the drinks, the sodas, the sundaes and serve the hot plates. I had to take all the dishes out, and clean the tables, and then I had to get them ready to be washed and polished. Then for the candy factory I had to have everything cleaned up for the chocolate dippers. They had great big trays, and they had a sort of a wax paper that they used to set the fresh dipped chocolates on. Did you ever see them dip chocolates?

King: Yes.

Jahnsen: We had to get all the different kinds of things ready so they could make the centers. Then I had to wrap chews--boy, I wrapped a million chews! [Laughter] I'd sit down in the booth and wrap chews for hours. Then I had to blanch all the almonds--big dish pans full--and it had to be boiling water. I got so I could squeeze those hulls off with two fingers of both hands, and blanch 'em and put 'em out and have them dry. [Laughter]

At Christmastime we made Christmas candy. I remember I was working the kiss cutter, and it got so hot in there that I fainted, and fell back and hit my head against the slab. "Well it's all right," they just took me in--little Johnny there--and put smelling salts under your nose, and that snapped you right up, and back on the job again, on the kiss cutter again!

We used to have to make all of the centers, you know, for the hard candy, and then had to clean all the display jars. All these chocolates were stored--and a chocolate isn't any good unless the center's mellowed. Sometimes you buy a chocolate, you know, and it's hard in the center? Well, that's a pretty good sign that's a new-dipped chocolate. The ones where they're mellow and runny inside--that choc's at least six months old. A lot of people don't know this. I had to go through all of the chocolates, and locate any that had leaks or drips on them. They had to be cleaned and resealed with hot chocolate.

King: You had to patch them up?

Jahnsen: Then they had to scrape all the leaks off, set 'em out, and then they had to take warm chocolate, and fix the leaks. I don't know why they let me do it because my hands were never too clean! [Laughter] It was chocolate--you couldn't tell or see it anyway.

Gee, I used to get so sick of smelling those chocolates. I ate so much candy at first, all I wanted, it made me sick to even smell the stuff. I worked this way right along, and I did this for over a year and a half.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Steele had a little old EMF-30, which was a little Flanders automobile, it was a little roadster, and I used to go out with him on Saturday. He was advertising candy chews. I would sit on the back and I'd toot, toot, toot with the bugle, and all the kids would come running and we'd throw out Yankee Chews--they called them--from great big tin cans. Everyone of them had a little sign on it, "Yankee Chews--Steele's candies." This was a way of advertising. I had to polish the brass headlights and windshield braces on the car, and wash the car--which wasn't bad. [Laughter] How much do you think I got a week?

King: I haven't any idea. I would guess three dollars.

Jahnsen: You hit it right on the head! [Laughter] Less than fifty cents a day--three dollars a week. And going to school too. So it wasn't so easy to do this.

While I was working, there was a fellow named Rodgers who owned a lithographing firm in San Francisco. The Rodgers were a very lovely family, and they used to come into the store at certain times. I don't know--he just took a fancy to me, I guess--seems like if people kind of took a liking to you, they'd offer you a job, like Earl Warren did to me.

On this occasion Mr. Rodgers asked me if I didn't want to go to work for him, and this was going to give me six dollars a week. This meant that I could commute to San Francisco, and the commutes in those days were three dollars a month. If I was going to work for them this meant that I would have to quit school. I still would be working and I wouldn't be subject to this rule of my father of going to sea.

I don't think my father did this with the idea of wanting to punish me, but I think he was putting pressure on me. I did



Jahnsen: more or less the same with my son, which was successful-- not exactly in that same way. But I probably needed this.

I then went over there and my job was to work in the lithographing department. When they had elections or large advertising mailings to go out, I had to make sure all the mailings were delivered to the post office. I had a cart with bit wheels on it. This office was in the Lick Building. If you're acquainted with San Francisco, you know where New Montgomery Street comes into Market. The Lick Building was at this intersection, or junction. They had an alley behind the office and I used to have to wheel this cart all the way down to the post office. Then I'd have to go by different places to pick up materials and different things to be processed. I used to have to push this cart around San Francisco. I was just about fourteen and a half or fifteen years old.

King: By this time you'd quit school, when you worked for the lithographing firm.

Jahnsen: Yes, I had to quit school just as I was starting in the eighth grade. That meant that I had to get more education, and I realized, to a great extent, the value of education. So I worked there for about a year.

I was very anxious about driving an automobile. I wasn't very tall. When I went in the Navy in 1917 I was five feet five and a half inches and weighed 125 pounds. And looked about fourteen.

When I was in my fifteenth year, I was offered a job with Reid Brothers Grocery Store in Berkeley, not too far from where we were living. Working there, as the delivery boy, I was paid eight dollars a week! Boy, that was a big increase in salary.

In those days your driving license didn't amount to much-- this is back about 1915 or 1916. My father died in 1916. I had this job driving the grocery truck, a 1912 Overland, and a motorcycle with a side car, making the deliveries, going to the markets and picking up produce, etcetera. I had to go out to customers' homes in the morning, take and fill and deliver the orders in the afternoon.

Jahnsen: About this time I decided there is a better way of making more money--a better way of getting ahead. I was told that if I went up to the Claremont Hotel I could get a job as a bellhop. I knew a boy who was working up there and he told me about all the tips he was making. I was then sixteen. I said, "Well, I'll do that." So I went up there, but it just wasn't in the cards. I couldn't qualify.

I then found out that the San Pablo Hotel, at the corner of 20th and San Pablo and Grove Streets--it's still there--was looking for a boy for an elevator operator. This was when my father died, when I was there in 1916. I went down there and got this job as a bellhop, and there's where I got my formal education in life, of all the things that went on, and that a boy of my age should never have been acquainted with.

My mother and father never believed in telling us about the bees and the birds--you had to learn the hard way. They were religious people. They were confirmed in the Lutheran Church, and one had to be very careful in the type of language he used. The minister and the Ladies' Aid Society used to hold meetings in our home.

I did learn a lot and got an education about the worldly ways of life, as a bellhop.

In the latter part of 1916, I received a better position with W.R. Chamberlin Company, lumber brokers and shippers. Mr. Chamberlin was a neighbor. They lived a short distance from our home in north Oakland. I was given the opportunity to learn the lumber business starting as an office boy.

Joining the Navy

Jahnsen: Being a very active boy and liking excitement, I didn't remain with the Chamberlin firm. In August, 1917, I enlisted in the navy and was called to active duty on September 15, 1917, in W.W. I. The nation was at war and it looked exciting, and I couldn't stay in a lumber office.

My father and brother had passed on, and my other brother was going to sea. My sister was married and had her family and I resided with my mother.



Jahnsen: I was just seventeen and the navy would not enlist me without my mother's consent. She was reluctant to give this and I had my father's brother, an uncle, to plead my cause with her, and she finally agreed.

That went on until March of 1919. I got out of the active service, and was in the U.S. naval reserve for the balance of the four year enlistment.

While I was in the service I became very active in naval security, and naval intelligence, and port security. Upon my release, I became a special employee of the Oakland police force. I was working in the chief's office. I was interested in investigative work. This was a continuation of intelligence or law enforcement work I started in the navy.

King: Did the navy assign you to port security? Did it just happen, or were you selected because they thought you looked good.

Jahnsen: No. It was a peculiar thing. I was on recruiting duty in a clerical job, looking after stationery supply and office equipment. I was also what they called an orderly to the commandant of the Twelfth Naval District in San Francisco. At that time I was a seaman. I had to work in a stationery room. They had all kinds of office equipment. It was in the Sheldon Building, Second and Market, as I remember now.

The commandant was a captain, a four-striper at that time. He was Captain Russell. This was a part of his office.

There was a sea captain in the merchant marines who owned the Standard Stevedoring Company. His name was Fremont Nash. He was a lieutenant commander in the U.S. naval reserve. He knew my father and had sailed with him. Commander Nash was the commanding officer of the port security force in San Francisco. He used to come up to the Twelfth Naval District for his orders.

While I was there something came up about my dad. I didn't know Nash at all at that time, but knew who he was. We had a chief yeoman there by the name of Lundy, and an old chief petty officer by the name of Bob White. Lundy was transferred to Nash's command. He'd heard there was an opportunity down there, and he knew about my background. As a result he requested that I be transferred down to the naval port guard, which was at Pier Seven in San Francisco in those days. Of course, at the

Jahnsen: time I got in there, it wasn't too many months before we had an armistice in 1918. I was on about eighteen months--maybe twenty months--active duty. It was good law enforcement and intelligence experience, too.

Business Experience and Education

Jahnsen: Following that I went to work for Christiansen, Hanify, and Weatherwax. Mr. Christiansen owned Sudden and Christiansen, a shipping and lumber business. My father worked for Mr. Ed Christiansen's father. My father knew this family back in Norway. Christiansen came from the same place in the old country that my father did.

King: That's interesting. I bet you think that everybody in Alameda came from Norway originally. [Laughter]

Jahnsen: This was just coincidence. Through family associations and friends I got a job there, working in the sample room. This came about also through W.R. Chamberlin and Company.

In July, 1920, while on an outing over the Fourth I was injured in an accident up here, near Santa Rosa, and it was during this stay in the hospital that I met my wife.

When I came out of the hospital and was hobbling on crutches, I decided to get more education. I realized while I was in the service, too, that I should extend my education if I wanted to get ahead in the navy. I advanced in rating from an apprentice seaman to a petty officer first class and temporary chief in a four-year enlistment, which is something that is rather hard to do.

I was in the reserve for a year and a half afterwards. However, the navy didn't have any formal reserve program--you didn't report. If they wanted you, they'd call you, and there wasn't any retainer money being paid in those days. That was the war to end all wars, so there weren't going to be any more. So no need for a reserve program.

King: Yes. I remember. Did Fremont Nash connect you with the Oakland police department?



Jahnsen: No. He had nothing to do with that.

While I was on recruiting duty, I was off at nights, and able to live at home on subsistence. They could have quartered me at Mare Island or Goat Island or someplace like that, but I got \$37.50 a month subsistence in addition to my base pay, and out of that I paid my commute and lived at home. I used to get home at five or six o'clock at night, four o'clock sometimes. I was home Saturdays, or whenever the main office was closed.

I then decided that I'd better get some more education. So I started night school at South Berkeley Business College. A fellow named Rodman headed it. The reason I went there, to go to his school, was that he was a member of the National Rifle Association, and he and I had become very friendly.

One Sunday morning I took one of his big automatic pistols--this was 1915, even before my father died--and I pulled the slide back and I shot myself right through the finger.

I knew Rodman very well. He's the one who encouraged me in this sport of hunting and shooting. I went to this night business college. It was in the South Berkeley Bank Building, upstairs there at Alcatraz and Adeline. I guess I spent about eight months there learning to type and trying to learn shorthand.

After my release from active service, I went down to Gallagher Marsh Business School and took a general business course there. Then I was injured, as I was telling you, in 1920 and '21, when I was living at home.

Investigator for the Oakland Police Department

Jahnsen: Jim Drew, who was then chief of police, was looking for somebody to do what you call special investigations, to be a confidential investigator.

I wasn't quite old enough to become a patrolman. At that time I think you had to be twenty-five, but I was just turning my twenty-first birthday. So I went down, and they gave me the job. I worked in the chief's office, associated with Bob



Jahnsen: Tracy, who was later chief. I was the confidential investigator for the chief's office.

King: For Drew? He was police chief, on and off, throughout the '20s, wasn't he?

Jahnsen: Well, you see, what happened--Frank Colbourn, who was commissioner of public health and safety, made Drew the chief.

King: I want to hear about Frank Colbourn. I think he's a fascinating man.

Jahnsen: He is. What happened afterwards, we had quite an overthrow in the political field, with the Mike Kelly people in Oakland. The commissioner form of government was voted out and the council form voted in. Charles Young then had control of the police department and he made Don Marshall the chief and Drew was out.

King: Now what does that mean, that you had an overthrow in the political field?

Jahnsen: Well, I would say that the politics got involved so much that they elected this man Charles Young. Charles Young was an engineer, and he had a very close friend named Don Marshall who later became chief. They also elected Leroy Goodrich. I believe he became head of the department of finance, and they elected a fellow by the name of [W. H.] Parker.

King: Yes, the famous Mr. Parker. [Laughter]

Jahnsen: William Parker.

When Drew was chief, he was there under Colbourn until this came in about 1925 or '26--1926, I guess it was, when Sheriff Frank Barnett was defeated and Burton Becker was elected sheriff. Parker came in, Goodrich was shifted around, and Young became the head of the public health and safety department. They moved Colbourn over, and I think he was head of public works department.

King: Public works.

Jahnsen: Yes. I think Goodrich became head of finance, or something like that.

King: Public works didn't have the port anymore; all the harbor money was out of there.

Agent for the U.S. Internal Revenue Service

Jahnsen: In April, 1922, I was appointed to the position of a U.S. agent of the Internal Revenue Department, in the Bureau of Prohibition.

King: You left the police department.

Jahnsen: Yes.

King: Is this part of the shake-up? Did Drew leave at that time, too?

Jahnsen: Oh no! This shake-up came afterwards. I left Drew because the opportunities were greater going to work for the government. Being a government agent meant a lot to me, and I was twenty-two.

Right following this job, we wanted to get married. My job there in the Oakland police department was not a secure job, but it was attached in such a way that I wasn't able to make the police patrol division. I had to be in this special branch. Then I would have to be twenty-five years old to have been eligible for the regular force. It was about two years before I would have been eligible to become a member of the police department, that is, a member of the patrol force. I wasn't too interested in that, because I wanted to study law.

I couldn't do it very well where I was, but then I got this appointment in the Internal Revenue Service and then transferred over--general agent. These were different branches in this service. For a while I was in charge of the coastal patrol for smugglers.

King: That was as a special assignment.

Jahnsen: Yes. Under the director, too, we worked closely with the intelligence unit of the Internal Revenue Service. Mr. Alf Oftedahl was in charge.

King: Were the general agents the people who raided bootlegging establishments?

Jahnsen: They all did. The special agents' office was more or less an office where they worked on every type of case, and they also had the investigative assignments--or the requirement--to investigate people in the Internal Revenue Service. They were a sort of in-service police department. They were in a little different category. A general agent was different than a federal prohibition agent. A federal prohibition agent came under the director.

The general agents, in addition to raiding bottlegging joints and things of that nature, had the winery inspection service, and those dealing with rabbi inspection who used wine for sacramental purposes, distilleries for medicinal and commercial purposes. You went around and checked these people and you gauged the wineries and distilleries.

The special agent's office worked on special tax matters, too. I only got over in the special agents' department as far as the smuggling detail was concerned.

Earl Warren became district attorney in 1925. He was appointed by the board of supervisors. Prior to this time he was an assistant district attorney. During the times that I was working in Alameda County, we didn't have any office over there. The office was in the Customs House in San Francisco, and up in the Grant Building and different buildings that we operated out of.

Earl Warren allowed us to operate out of the district attorney's office. Warren wanted to enforce the Prohibition law and vice laws. Not that he was a Prohibitionist, but he believed that it was on the law books, so the law should be enforced.

When Ezra Decoto was district attorney, we used the DA's office also but to a limited degree. Mr. Decoto wasn't as determined about enforcing the vice laws, you might say, or liquor laws. He believed this was not for the district attorney but for the police agencies.

During this period of time I became acquainted with everybody in the office. I used to be in there most every day, or maybe five times a week. I could come and go in the office, and everybody knew me, and it was just like I was working there.

Jahnsen: George Helms, who was then the county detective, and I were very close. They had a fellow named Ray Laughrey, and a fellow named Al Wogaman. These two fellows were automobile drivers and worked under Helms. They drove the district attorney, or they went around the county and did errands, picked up the evidence from the local court clerks and stored it for the trials in the superior courts. They were going to college and worked during non-school hours, later full time.

Ray Laughrey later went into the insurance business, and Al Wogaman went into the automobile business. But they were friends of Ezra Decoto's. Warren kept all that staff on when he became district attorney.

King: So the time you're talking about really is around 1925.

Jahnsen: Yes, in January. Well, of course in 1924, I was in and out of that office.

When Warren became district attorney he wanted to enforce the law. Helms thought it would be a good idea if we quartered there. He just felt that this was a little closer, and then they could pass on any information--information was continually pouring in, and they had no way of handling these complaints. They wanted to make sure who they were working with were honest people, and people that they could rely upon. They wouldn't let every agent go in there--that office wasn't open to all, but just a couple of us, and I was one of them.

So I became better acquainted with Mr. Warren. We had many raids in the county that resulted in unfounded complaints being brought against our actions--that we were rude and rough, reckless, and we were just knocking people around. We had no regard for their rights, or anything--civil rights in those days didn't mean anything, according to the complaints. Law enforcement officers were accused of violating the fourth and fifth amendments, illegal searches and seizures. But we, some of us, were closely following the law--as close as we could.

King: When you say illegal search and seizure was simple, what do you mean?

Jahnsen: I would say that we operated through obtaining search warrants from the United States commissioners, who issued the search warrant. It was required that we get a search warrant when

Jahnsen: necessary. The federal court wasn't following the liquor laws as closely as they were in narcotics. With the liquor laws it was pretty liberal. The United States attorney didn't require as much.

It used to be evidence was legal no matter how you obtained it. If you stole it--you broke into a house and stole it--you got the evidence, you could use it. In the state courts too. You had to have reasonable grounds to believe that the law was being violated. You had to have "probable cause," as they used the term, or reasonable grounds to believe--if one of your senses told you--your smell or your eyes--told you that there was a violation. Just like if a policeman saw a fellow shoot someone, he knew that this was a felony--he can't turn the other way, he had to do his duty.

In this case, it meant the same--as I say, it was very liberal--we would go down a block where somebody'd tell us they thought there was a still operating in a neighborhood or apartment, and we would go around and sniff. [Laughter] At nighttime you'd ride by, and you'd smell this thing, or you'd see people coming and going with bottles.

We had a rabbi down on 14th Street in Oakland--his name was Garfinckel. We had some reason to believe that this fellow had on the list of his congregation a lot of Irishmen. They were no more interested in the Jewish faith or religion--but they were a member of the congregation. They used to have a little tag--just a little mimeographed thing--this member with a number and the person's name. Well, you'd have Mahoney and Flynn and many others who were not Jews or members of a legitimate congregation. [Laughter] He'd come out with a gallon of port wine from the rabbi's house. Or a gallon of sherry--anything the rabbi blessed was good enough for sacramental purposes. Even a bottle of champagne! [Laughter]

So we'd go by and we'd have a belief--our senses would convince us that the law was being violated. However, we didn't have any definite, or concrete evidence. So we'd go to the commissioner on that basis and we would sign an affidavit that we had reasonable grounds to believe that this place had a large quantity of liquor or a still in it. Some officers would go down there with a search warrant, and go in,

Jahnsen: and there was nothing there. They were absolved of any violation of civil rights. They would break the door down, maybe. They were absolved of anything even at two o'clock in the morning. Wake the family up, and the noise they made, they'd think the house was coming apart. They had a reason to complain, but in those days you didn't think much of that.

Well, the officers would say, "It must have been next door." So they smell over the fence, and they just change the address and go over next door, and knock. [Laughter] They'd say, "We got a search--" They never leave the copy with the occupants, just show him the search warrant, and say, "You can't keep that--we've got to file that." It was very seldom that happened, but it did happen. I don't recall it happening directly in my case, but I know that it did in others. In other words the law was loosely enforced.

We had these people out there in Castro Valley by the name of Blackburn. Mrs. Blackburn, I guess, was about the finest woman who ever put powder in a safe. She was just about as square as a billiard ball. She was running a place there that thought nothing of having a few girls, common prostitutes, around for the convenience of the customers. They would be waitresses and one thing and another and they were bootlegging. So we raided it.

I guess we were probably a little more rough than we should be. We were being pushed around by the guests, but we weren't going to be shoved around, either. We had been in some pretty close scrapes--shot at a couple of times, and worked over with people ganging up on the officers, so it was just a rough deal.

So she come in and complained to the district attorney that she wanted a warrant for our arrest. Mr. Warren, then the chief assistant district attorney, asked me about this matter. So I told him what happened. We went out there, raided the place, with a search warrant, and this was the kind of a joint that not only bootlegged, but had prostitutes and other law violators. Mr. Warren had her come back. He asked me if I would be present. Of course he could have issued a warrant for our arrest if he believed her story. So I said, "Sure," and I listened to her story. Then I told my view of what took place.

Jahnsen: He just said, "Well, Mrs. Blackburn, you have a lot of nerve coming in here accusing these officers for a kind of a place you're running. I have a good mind to abate your place." He told her that from information he had received from other sources, the kind of a place she was running, she was operating with a bunch of underworld racketeers and lewd women around. Mr. Warren became more familiar with my operations.

I think I told you this before that he was keeping company with Nina Palmquist at that time. Her name was Nina Meyers, but her maiden name was Palmquist. They lived downtown in Oakland, 13th and Brush.

This man Garfinckel, this phoney rabbi, and several others down there who were rabbis, had a lucrative bootlegging business. He ordered a truckload of gallon bottles, and of course this meant drunks and all kinds of people hanging around the neighborhood.

So Warren felt that something ought to be done about it. Now he didn't have any enforcement agency that he controlled-- he was assistant district attorney then. The sheriff wouldn't do anything; the police department was lax and limited; you had a morals squad, but they were afraid of the rabbis because of their legal status.

He asked me if I couldn't do something about it. I says, "Sure I will." Another agent named [John] Vail was working with me. He used to be a Department of Justice agent in the old Department of Justice that worked on the radicals, the I.W.W., the Wobblies, if you know what they are. They were known as the International Workers of the World, also known as the Wobblies.

King: Oh, I know what the Wobblies were.

Jahnsen: The I.W.W.'s known as the International Workers of the World. He, Vail, was very active working undercover in their organization when they used to burn all the wheat fields, barns, and houses down. John Vail was a sort of a Wobbly-looking fellow himself! [Laughter]

Anyway John and I conducted this investigation for Mr. Warren. He (Garfinckel) lived further down in that area from the Palmquists. John Vail and I discussed the idea that we

Jahnsen: ought to clean it up and get it over with. We did some surveillance, to see what we can find out.

This was about four o'clock in the afternoon that Mr. Warren had discussed this matter with me. When it got dark, about seven or eight o'clock, Vail and I went around and sized the whole situation up, and who come down the street, but Earl Warren. He was on his way to the Palmquists. He never give me all the background information he had; he just told me where it was. I hadn't met Nina Warren until later.

On seeing us, he inquired as to what we were doing there. "Well," I said, "You told me this afternoon what was going on in this neighborhood. I want to find out everything about it." He said, "It don't take you long to get on the job!" [Laughter] Or something to this effect. So this kind of brought us together a little bit more, closer in our associations.

There was another incident that gave him cause to view the way I worked. There was a bootlegger named Harry Brown who ran the Occidental Hotel in Hayward. This fella was running the same kind of an outfit that Mrs. Blackburn was. This was about 1924. The district attorney's office was about to abate this place as a violation of the red-light abatement act and for violation of the National Prohibition Act.

When the abatement proceedings were under way, Brown had a lawyer by the name of Raine Uhl, and Raine Uhl was a sort of a crack pot or a hot-head. He was an addict, I think, but he was a vicious sort of a fellow, sly and tricky. I was about twenty-three or twenty-four years old, then. When Brown became aware that we were going to raid his place--it didn't take long for the alarm to spread--as we entered the place, he ran out in the back, and he took the bottle of liquor he had and he threw it in a big coalbin, and it broke. I quickly mopped up all I could of coal dust and liquor and squeezed it into a pan, and then poured it into a bottle, and it looked just like coal juice. The U.S. chemists analyzed it as moonshine liquor. At the time of the raid, Brown was arrested.

This was one of the cases that was used in the abatement proceedings against the hotel, that Mr. Warren tried and won. Mr. Warren believed in enforcement of the laws, and the Occidental Hotel should have been abated.

Jahnsen: They called me as a witness. I can remember that when I got on the stand Uhl was taking me over the ground, as he called it--going over the different things that happened. He said, "Well, where was Brown when this happened?" I said, "Well, he was in the back." "And where were you?" I said, "Out in the front." He said, "Well how could you see that, and what about other raiders?" I said, "Well, I could run faster than they could, and I chased him back there, and saw what he did." He said, "You ran faster. How fast can you run?"

He kept on going over all this type of questioning, so I turned to the judge, and I said, "Your Honor, I don't think that I ought to answer these kind of questions on how fast I can run. I told the counsel that I could run faster than Mr. Brown, and I saw what happened, and the proof of it is I found the evidence, and arrested the man." So the judge says, "I think we'll just finish the question here. Mr. Uhl, I don't think you have any more pertinent questions to ask. I'll give an order abating the place." Judge James Quinn was the judge. He was a person that would never want to abate a place unless it was absolutely necessary.

One of the things that the law enforcement agencies used to do in those days in order to give the judge some moral support, without him knowing he was getting it, they would invite in all of the anti-saloon league members that they could and all of the church people, and they'd pass the word around that this case was going to be very important. Mr. Warren wouldn't do this, but those church people interested in enforcement who were following these kind of cases, they'd bring them all down, and they'd sit in the courtroom, and listen as spectators to what the judge was going to do in this case.

Well, the judge had to recognize those present as good citizens and wanted these places closed up. So he would abate it, because politically this would not be wise to do otherwise. In those days, places like this didn't disturb a lot of people.

The Tribune and the Post-Enquirer and the others would make an issue of this kind of case. So he abated the place. It was during these trials and working out of the district attorney's office, that Mr. Warren had a chance to observe me and my operations.

Joining the District Attorney's Staff

Jahnsen: One day Warren said to me that he hoped to be appointed district attorney. He said Ezra Decoto was leaving and he hoped he could get favorable consideration from the board of supervisors, and that if he received the appointment, he said, "I'd like to talk to you about coming to work for us--for me." He said, "Don't mention this to anybody." I agreed not to discuss his offer of employment.

But a peculiar coincidence happened. Frank Shay, who was also an assistant district attorney under Mr. Decoto, also told me something similar. Now, I knew Frank Shay, too. Frank was handling the work with the prosecuting attorneys. He was handling more of the criminal work. Warren was handling more of the civil work.

King: Yes. Wasn't Mr. Warren advising the board of supervisors and the school departments and such?

Jahnsen: Yes, he was. He was acting as advisor to the board.

So I didn't say anything to anybody about Mr. Warren's offer. But I had my mind made up that this would be a good move for me, no matter which one was the district attorney. Then I could be in the district attorney's office and then I'd have the benefit of what went on there, plus the fact that I could study law--at least I thought I could. I found out later on that this was just not possible, that this was as hard as working in that candy store and included long hours! There wasn't enough hours in a day. We were also working night and day in the enforcement of the vice laws as well as the other kind of criminal cases.

King: Frank Shay sounds like an excellent person.

Jahnsen: An excellent person? Oh, a very, very fine man, and a very fine family. Before he studied law, he was a seaman. He used to go to sea. He was a chief officer in the merchant marine. He later studied law and after passing the bar joined the district attorney's staff, and become an assistant. He was a supporter of Mike Kelly.

King: He was a Kelly man?

Jahnsen: Yes. But a very fine man. He had a very lovely wife. He later became very active or head of--I think it was the county or the federal government activities in the agricultural field--and they lived down around Morgan Hill. Mr. Shay was disappointed, naturally, when Warren was appointed district attorney.

King: Of course.

THE ALAMEDA COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE IN THE 1920s

Political Influence

King: Did you have to be interested in politics to get a job like deputy district attorney in Decoto's office?

Jahnsen: Yes and no. A young lawyer just coming out of law school had to do one of two or three things. If you had been admitted to practice and had the money to set yourself up in a law business, you most likely wouldn't get many clients. Having no experience, you wouldn't know how to practice law. You might have the education and have passed the bar examination, and be admitted to practice, but you then would either have to associate yourself with some legal firm--and it wasn't easy to get in to some of these legal firms, particularly a large firm, because there were many young men and women that wanted to get into these offices to get experience. All of them had mostly to work for nothing.

The same was true in the district attorney's office. Now if you knew Ezra Decoto, or somebody who has influence with Ezra Decoto, your opportunity for a job was much greater, more so, I'd say, with Decoto than Warren. However, if you knew Warren, and he knew your background and knew that you had the ability and desire to make something of yourself, he'd be most anxious to give you a chance.

Decoto would be more the type of a person that would be interested in your political connections. It's my opinion, Decoto wanted able and honest help, but would say, "Well, Mike Kelly wants to put somebody in the office," or some supervisors whom Decoto had faith in wanted to do a favor for

Jahnsen: some young man or girl who just got out of law school or secretarial school. He'd let them come over and work in the office--study law, or work on the secretarial staff and they could use the law library, and sit in and help a deputy try a case, or the secretary could assist in taking statements and the law student could assist a deputy work the case up, and do legal research.

King: Did you have any political affiliation at this point? Were you a Republican party member?

Jahnsen: No, no, no. I was only a young man with no political connections. My folks were Republicans. I don't think they knew much difference between being a Republican and a Democrat, although they always thought the Republican party was the best party, in those days.

King: Did Warren have any political affiliations at this point? Frank Shay was a Kelly man, but was Warren associated with a particular group in the Republican party?

Jahnsen: In answer to your question about Mr. Warren, I don't know. I would say that during this period of time, it was my impression that the Republican party was somewhat split up. The Knowlands were one faction, they had the Oakland Tribune, and then you had the Hearst group and their papers. I think Mike Kelly had more influence with the Hearsts papers than Warren did; however, this is the way it appeared to me.

I'd say that Warren was more of an independent Republican, not being influenced by any political faction in the party. I think he got his political support and his backing because of the kind of a man he was. I don't think he relied on any political pull or connection to get his position any more than I did with Warren.

Warren only selected me--not because I was Oscar Jahnsen, and had some friends, as I didn't have any outstanding friends and political influence. He needed people that he could trust and whom he felt had the type of experience he could use.

King: And you had certain qualities--

Jahnsen: As I said, the qualifications that he thought would fit in best with his law enforcement plans. He knew that I'd been in

Jahnsen: the chief's office of the Oakland Police Department, and Chief Drew spoke very highly of me--also the government work that I'd been doing and the fact that he'd seen me operate while I was working with his county detectives out of his office.

He selected others in the same way. Chet Flint was another inspector he selected. Flint was a member of the Oakland police force. Mr. Warren appointed him one of the inspectors, and we'll come to that in a few minutes. He was an Oakland police officer, but he didn't have any political connections, I'm sure. I don't think Warren would have wanted you if you had.

Now Ezra Decoto once said to me, "You know, I'd always had in mind that some day if I put on any more investigators in the office, you'd be one of the fellas that I would have considered." There must have been some discussion about the need for more investigators between Warren, Shay, and Decoto.

This is purely a surmise. It may not have happened at all. But the fact that these three people had made this remark that they were looking for some people with certain law enforcement qualifications made me feel that probably there had been some thought about a change in the operation of the district attorney's office, with regards to active law enforcement.

King: When Decoto was DA, he didn't have any investigative staff in his office, did he?

Jahnsen: Well, he did. He had George Helms, who was a county detective, and then he had two drivers, Al Wogaman, and then Ray Laughrey. Wogaman left and then Ray Laughrey got a job.

King: Did Warren rely more on the investigative staff, or consider the investigator's work a more important function in the office than Decoto did?

Jahnsen: Yes. I think Decoto was a good district attorney, and a sincere, honest man. He was a very fine person. I knew Mr. Decoto very well.

I don't think Decoto ever took any sides in the selection of the district attorney, for Shay or for Warren. I think he was neutral. When he went to the Railroad Commission, I think

Jahnsen: he became neutral as to who was going to follow him. He knew he had two people in the office, Shay and Warren, that wanted to be district attorney. I don't think he took sides, although I think that Decoto stood well in the eyes of Mike Kelly. I think that Mike Kelly wouldn't have fought Ezra Decoto like he did Warren. Kelly wouldn't have fought Shay. Shay was a Kelly man.

But again Warren wasn't. The Kelly forces didn't want anything to do with Warren.

King: Why didn't the Kelly forces want anything to do with Warren?

Jahnsen: They couldn't handle him.

King: He wasn't controllable.

Jahnsen: Not in the sense that a politician could dictate to him. He just wasn't going to be controlled. He would not be subject to political influence.

King: Well, what was the influence of Joe Knowland on Warren's thinking?

Jahnsen: I think it would be to the effect that he would support Warren and Warren's thinking, because they were against the Mike Kelly political machine and his administration. When Warren became district attorney, the anti-Kelly people wanted a change in the type of politics that was being operated in the county.

King: Do you think Knowland had any influence with Johnny Mullins?

Jahnsen: No, he was up until this time a Kelly man.

King: Do you think that was why Mullins pushed Warren?

Jahnsen: No, I am sure this was not the case. I'll tell you that story when we come along to it.

King: Mullins was a Kelly man?

Jahnsen: At that time. Yes.

King: I must say that the politics of Alameda County makes you tear your hair!

Jahnsen: Well, this was a complicated thing, unless you were brought up with it, and then it's very simple. I don't think that J.R. Knowland or anyone else had any influence on Mr. Warren if Mr. Warren had his mind made up to do something. Warren is fearless. I think that whatever he thought was right, nothing or anyone would stop him from doing what was right, come hell or high water, even if it meant his political career. I think he felt doing the right thing was more important than his personal future or his career.

He is a deep thinker, and a very honest man. He looked for and saw the truth and the best interest for his fellow man. He could see what the future offered. It's fantastic the vision that this man has.

I think that he would discuss many things with Mr. Knowland. He would talk to Knowland, but made his own judgments and decisions.

Now, with Knowland's sons--I know that Bill had a brother named Russ that was in the Tribune there, but he wasn't too much of a heavyweight. He was a very nice fella, but I think he was more of a playboy, not like Bill.

Bill is a very fine person, an outstanding individual in my opinion. I think he's just a terrific fella, absolutely honest, dedicated to the principles of free life and freedom of speech and "you live your life, and I'll live mine." He wants to protect your interests. I think he's very conservative. I don't think he sees some of these things that we call "liberal" in a sense.

I think there was an influence there with Warren. I think Warren felt that he could trust Bill. He admired Bill's ability and appreciated Bill's views. They had many conferences. What they discussed and what went on between them was between Mr. Warren and Bill.

King: Do you think that later when Bill Knowland ran for senator on the right-to-work platform that Warren tried to influence him at all at that point?

Jahnsen: No. I think Bill Knowland is a solid individual. I think Warren would feel that this wasn't his province, that he shouldn't interfere in this. When he appointed Bill as a

Jahnsen: United States Senator, he gave Knowland a free hand and never tried to influence Knowland. He was satisfied with Knowland's thinking, and whatever decisions he made, they were his own.

Mr. Warren, I don't think, ever became active in helping to see him re-elected, any more than he did with others he appointed. The only man that I feel sure that he helped to become elected to public office was Goodwin Knight as lieutenant governor.

King: That's interesting.

Jahnsen: Mr. Fred Houser was lieutenant governor at that time and an ultra-conservative. He was not cooperative with Warren, but was influenced by Southern California people and interests that Governor Warren just couldn't go along with. When Governor Warren would leave the state the lieutenant governor would take over. His decisions would be exactly opposite to those Governor Warren would make.

Governor Warren felt that he wanted to have a lieutenant governor in there that he could have more confidence in. I don't think he personally hated or had any real feeling of hatred, but he resented his actions.

I feel sure that Governor Warren felt that Goodwin Knight, a superior court judge, would be a better lieutenant governor, and he went along with him. He didn't go out on the block and actively campaign by making speeches, but his feeling was with Mr. Knight, and I'm satisfied this was the thing that elected Goodwin Knight. It wasn't Governor Warren's policy to come out and endorse anybody for public office, and neither would he want anybody in his office to do it, and when they did, without discussing it with him, he was disturbed, but would not take punitive action.

I know one case in particular where one of the assistant district attorneys at that time went for a strong Democratic candidate, at a time when Warren was Republican committee chairman. Mr. Warren said, "Well, that's his privilege; if that's what he wants to do, that's all right." He wasn't going to fire the man for it. But the fellow was honest and went and told Warren how he felt about it.

King: That he was going to do that.

Jahnsen: He did that. Of course that was many years ago.

Sheriff Frank Barnet and the Case of Bessie Ferguson

Jahnsen: We had a sheriff named Frank Barnet. Contra Costa County had a sheriff for over forty years. His name was [R.R.] Veale. Veale was the oldest sheriff in point of service at this period of time in the state of California. He had a son named Billy Veale, who was under-sheriff. Sheriff Frank Barnet and Veale were really old-time sheriffs. Frank Barnet was very liberal. He'd sit down and drink during Prohibition. He was what a lot of people called a regular guy. He didn't think anything of prostitutes and open gambling operating. He believed you needed those!

King: That's life, huh?

Jahnsen: Yes. You needed this, you see. It was a common belief that if you close these places up, you'll have a lot of rape cases on your hands. Well, that's what many people thought.

In his investigative force he had a criminal and a civil division. Joe Soares was a very liberal sort of a fella. He was the chief criminal deputy. A very good man, a good investigator--an honest man in all intents and purposes.

Sheriff Frank Barnet became involved in the Bessie Ferguson case. It was reported that he was supposed to be out at a bootlegging place on Park Avenue. It was reported that Bessie Ferguson met her death there. It was rumored that Frank Barnet was keeping company with her. She had lived over on, I think, Fifth Avenue, between Fourth or Fifth Street, down in that neighborhood.

Anyway, it was reported that she got in an argument there at this place, and someone struck her and knocked her down a flight of stairs and killed her. Now, I don't know if that's true, so this would only be a hearsay story, as far as I'm concerned. It was reported that they were drunk at the time.

I later heard that in order to dispose of the remains they cut her up. The newspapers were full of the story. They had to dispose of the body, and she was just going to disappear into thin air, as far as whoever was responsible for this was concerned. The story went on that there was a certain veterinarian who was very closely associated in this group,

Jahnsen: and that after they took the body out there, they dismembered the body and they cooked all of the meat off of the bones, and this is what was believed by those who were investigating it. They kept it very, very quiet.

Some of her remains were disposed of by throwing the bones into the marsh along the bay in Contra Costa County over in El Cerrito. Some duck hunters found this woman's ear with some hair on it hanging on a tule.

King: So that's why it's called the "tule murder"?

Jahnsen: Yes. They found these here and some of the bones in a sack, which was just thrown over there. Cut up in small pieces so they'd fit into a stew pot. That's the reason--they were satisfied, but they could never prove it--they were cut to a certain size that would fit certain kettles, to cook the meat off. They didn't find all of the remains.

However, these were guarded very closely, and they were taken out to the University. Some pathologists or some other scientists worked on this and later on, by the Bay Farm Island bridge they found some more bones--just happened to be fished up by someone. So they put this together, and Bessie Ferguson had disappeared, and they come to the conclusion that this was Bessie Ferguson's remains.

I don't think they ever positively identified--now maybe they did--that this was Bessie Ferguson's remains. The ear had something to do with it, the hair had something to do with it. In those days they weren't too scientific about examination, to make a positive determination. I don't think they found the skull or any of the teeth.

Now I did hear that a good portion of the remains were at the University, but I don't know. The Oakland Police Department and the Contra Costa authorities were handling the investigation.

The Ku Klux Klan

King: Let me just ask you this about the Bessie Ferguson case. How do the vigilantes get into this?

Jahnsen: Who?

King: The vigilantes.

Jahnsen: I never heard of this.

King: Apparently there was a committee of exercised citizens, shall we say, that were somehow related to the Klan, that wanted justice done.

Jahnsen: Oh no. Now this brings something back.

In 1926 there was an election, and it was Mr. Warren's first election to run for district attorney. This was when Preston Higgins ran against Mr. Warren. Of course this was a long time ago, and I will try to remember as closely as I can what took place.

King: You're remembering magnificently.

Jahnsen: What I'm going to tell you is that the city of Piedmont had a chief of police named Burton F. Becker, and several other persons. I recall one by the name of Fred--

King: Haase?

Jahnsen: No. Haas. They were associated with the Ku Klux Klan. This Ku Klux Klan group appeared to me to be in a sense vigilantes. I had worked with some of these people during the time I was a federal agent, enforcing the Prohibition laws.

Fred Haas was the fellow I was thinking of. He was later chief of police when Becker became the sheriff. Fred Haas was closely associated with the people in this group.

King: There's a report in some paper I read of a meeting of the Klan in Piedmont, in about 1925.

Jahnsen: Well, this could have been. The Klan was very active in those days, in enforcing the Prohibition laws, and I think I told you

Jahnsen: the story about how we went out and raided a place on 29th Avenue.

A fellow by the name of Marconi, I think it was--I think it was 1129 29th Avenue where Park Street and 29th Avenue come together--had this bootlegging joint there. It was abated, downstairs, and Marconi kept his safe in the abated section of the building downstairs. He climbed through the window; the place has been locked up by the U.S. marshall, and he went in. The place was under abatement. The federal locks were on there, the U.S. marshall's and the U.S. court notice of abatement was posted on the door. In entering, he was violating the federal court order.

Anyway, it was in his home--he lived upstairs--so he just continued to bootleg upstairs--they only abated the downstairs, the old barroom. But he kept his money and valuables, Liberty Bonds and such there and he went in to get his bail money. Marconi wanted to put up his own bonds. He didn't want bail bondsmen to put up the bonds, because if he did this would cost him considerable, about ten percent.

King: Several fortunes, yes.

Jahnsen: Yes. A lot of money. So he went in there and got these bonds out, and the safe was full of bonds and money. One of these Klansman, who entered with Marconi saw this, so his idea was that we should go back later. He said he saw him open the safe, he held the flashlight on the safe and on him. Marconi told him, "No lights on." This Klansman thought he could open the safe, and so he wanted to go back and try it.

I said, "Well, I just want to tell you frankly--it's all right, you go back." I would know who did it then, and if anything is missing. I said, "You'll be one of the guys that will go in the clink, because I'm not going to be a part of this, and I'm not going to keep this quiet. I'm going to report it, and if anything happens there," I said, "believe you me you're going to be the first suspect! So if I were you, I'd stay away from it." I was driving him out to his home after this raid that night, and he decided maybe afterwards he wouldn't do it.

King: You were telling me about Becker being the police chief of Piedmont.

Jahnsen: Oh, yes. Well, anyway the 1926 election came along, and Barnet was defeated.

You brought up the question about these people organizing. Well, they used the Bessie Ferguson case against Barnet. It leaked out that he, Barnet, was one of the group that was responsible for her murder. I really don't know whether they ever did prove that she was the victim, but she never has been located so it's a pretty good chance that she was. [Laughter] Her brothers and her father and mother lived down there, and they were much disturbed about the thing, and of course Barnet lived not too far from her, on 12th and Oak it was, in a big house on the corner there.

Barnet was a very generous sort of a person. He was a short, stocky-built man--always wore a big diamond stud and a big diamond ring, and smoked a cigar, and very worldly sort of a fella. He just couldn't see anything wrong in the bootlegging business, though he did assign a man to work in the district attorney's office with the people that Mr. Warren had appointed as inspectors. His name was Charlie Blagbourne.

Charlie Blagbourne was very loyal to Mr. Warren and his staff as I found it. I worked very closely with him, as did the other investigators. He wanted to get over on this district attorney's staff and after Barnet lost to Becker, Mr. Warren appointed him an inspector and he remained in this position till he died. He died in 1935, during the state board of equalization investigation, of a heart attack.

Charlie was one of Frank Barnet's criminal deputies. He worked under Joe Soares. They did everything they could, at that time, to cooperate, but they wouldn't do anything to enforce the vice laws. These deputies would enforce the major criminal statutes only.

Their main reasons for not enforcing the vice laws were this would ruin their underworld contacts, to get information through these contacts. These were people that would give them leads on criminals and everything else they felt important in major law enforcement. Well, the contacts did to an extent. They knew the underworld and they were around many undesirables and anything they knew they'd tip the sheriffs off to this information.

Jahnsen: So the deputies didn't look at this vice condition with any evil eye, you might say. They looked at it as a matter-- "What the hell, a bootlegger? That's a federal job--a federal law. Let them enforce it." So they excused themselves from this. But Charlie Blagbourne didn't.

Then getting back to the time when Becker--they took over--Jack Collier was retained by Becker and he was a good Catholic. This was odd for the KKK's to retain a Catholic, as they were against Catholics. His son was city attorney there for a while, and a fine person. They were strong Catholics, and why they would have anything to do with the Ku Klux Klan, who were death on Catholics and Jews and Negroes-- why he would have anything to do with them--except they must have felt he was a contact, as he was in the office for many years.

They had a person named Arnold R. Shurtleff. Shurtleff worked with me in the Prohibition department. Arnold Shurtleff was married and had six or seven children and they lived in Alameda. A person that was trying hard to get ahead, but fell in with these fellas, and I believe he was a Ku Kluxer. He associated with him and they thought a lot of Shurtleff.

Parker was in with that group. Now a lot of these people belonged to the Masonic lodges. That didn't mean that they were good people. The teachings didn't seem to have any effect on them.

King: What did the Klan believe in at that time in Oakland? What were they for?

Jahnsen: I don't know, but I don't think they changed very much in what they believe today. They believed something like, you might say, in a sense like the Birchers. They believed that Jews and Negroes were no damn good, they believed that the Negroes ought to be moved out, and Catholics were no damn good. They believed in true, what they called loyal Americanism. I don't know how the hell you could be a true, loyal American and have those kind of beliefs. From what they preached, this was what they were set to do.

They'd burn fiery crosses, and they held big night raids, and they wore big robes, and hats, you know--garments and everything else. They claimed to be an off shoot of the old south Klansmen.

King: That whole crooked group seems to be concentrated in the Klan.

Jahnsen: Well, a lot of them were. I think there was a lot of good people who believed in good law enforcement and believed in the teachings of the Klan--I don't know exactly what the teachings of the Klan were, only from what they said and for what they stood. But I know that they came to me and wanted me to join the Klan. Well, I was going in the Masonic lodge and I didn't want to get involved with any of these people. I didn't have their beliefs; my folks never had those kind of beliefs, and so I had no reason to be associated with them.

However there were a lot of people that were in the Klan and when they found out what it was, they got out, figuring it was un-American, but I don't think a lot of people gave too much thought about what they're going into or joining or who they're going to associate with.

After Becker and the others got into the sheriff's office, Parker became under sheriff and he then ran for the Oakland city council, or for commissioner of streets of the city of Oakland. I don't think the city council form of government was in at that time. It was before they had the council form. This was later, I think it was 1928--maybe the election was in '27--to change the Oakland form of government. This is when Parker and others took over the city government, when it was still a commissioner type of government.

County Detectives

Jahnsen: Charlie Blagbourne had been in the office under Barnet, and when Barnet was out, I can remember one thing, that when we went over and were sworn in under Becker, as his deputy, our legal status as peace officers came under the sheriff.

The district attorney was in a different category under this law and he had no police functions, he had no police powers. He was a prosecuting officer, and a legal adviser until a bill was passed that made the county detectives, under the district attorneys, peace officers. A county detective under the district attorney received his peace officer status and police powers through the sheriff. He was an investigator in the district attorney's office and an ex officio deputy sheriff.

Jahnsen: In those days the constables served the township courts and they were peace officers. Some of the investigators in the district attorney's office received their police status, by becoming deputy constables. One could be a deputy constable, and have the power of a peace officer, or a deputy sheriff, or a police officer.

So we were sworn in as deputy sheriffs, and we had their badges. Later others were sworn in as deputy constables so as not to be under Sheriff Becker, who could have revoked their deputy status.

When Becker came in he changed all the badges, and it was necessary to go over and get new badges. Becker swore us in, and said he wanted to work very cooperatively with us, and would do everything to cooperate, and that he admired the district attorney and his law enforcement program, and he wanted to be a part of this force. But he wanted to be the main law enforcement officer in the county. He was going to be the chief law enforcer of the county--he was going to run the county. The district attorney had his job to do in prosecuting crime. Becker was going to have all the law enforcement people under him.

This man Becker was just off his rocker. He used to be an electrician, and he worked for the PG&E, I think, and he didn't have too much law enforcement background. He became chief of police of Piedmont through some political groups up there.

Fred Haas was his assistant. Fred was a nice fella. He, too, got involved, but not with Becker and his associates, but in some automobile transactions.

When we went over to be deputized, Becker had a lot of big pictures of himself. A peculiar thing happened; he was so generous with his photograph! He wrote on mine, "To Oscar Jahnsen from his very close and best friend, Burton F. Becker, Sheriff of Alameda County." He said the same to George Helms. So he gave us new badges.

We thanked him very much, and of course the district attorney then turned all the work over to the new sheriff. Warren wanted to dispense with all this work, and get rid of being both a DA and law enforcement officer.

Jahnsen: Now, when Mr. Warren became district attorney and saw the need to enforce the vice laws as Sheriff Barnet was not doing his duty, he asked the board of supervisors for additional positions of investigators in his office and the board of supervisors gave him the positions the DA needed in the investigative force, or county detective force. They weren't called "inspectors of the district attorney's office." That term came later.

Becker, then, later, as I said, was going to take over all of the work. One of the first tip-offs we had was when Charlie Blagbourne, who was then in the DA's office, said that Jack Collier came to him and said to him, "Charlie, you've had all the gravy, now, for all of these times--who are the connections? Who are the people you deal with, and who's the pay-off? Who do you collect your money from? Who pays you off?" They thought that the district attorney and his men were being paid off by the underworld for allowing certain things to operate in the cities. We never interfered in the cities' enforcement, only the county. This was up to the chief of police.

Well, it was furthest from Warren's mind to set up a county police force, only where enforcement had broken down, like Emeryville, and in the county. The story broke then that the sheriff's men were on the take. There was a person in San Leandro, an automobile dealer--he sold Willys Overland cars--his name was Fred Smith.

King: Oh, yes. Mr. Smith!

Jahnsen: I don't really think that was his real name. He was married to a woman by the name of Edna. He was very close in this group in the Ku Klux Klan. Becker had him as the pay-off collector. Those who were interested in making pay-offs were told to see Smith. Smith was supposed to make all the collections. Well, then complaints begin to come in about pay-offs to the district attorney's office. Of course we weren't making any investigations, arrests and raids; we washed our hands of all that. We were out investigating other types of cases.

In other words, when a case that was to be tried would come to the office, Mr. Warren would have to receive the case from the police court, when it was held to answer for trial in

Jahnsen: the superior court. Then we'd work the case up with a deputy DA to try it. That meant we had to interview the witnesses, get the transcripts and the testimony, and we had to pick up the evidence from the police court, and coroner's jury reports, and we got everything together for the trial in the superior court. A deputy was assigned to try the case and the deputy would work with us. The deputy would have, maybe, ten cases assigned to him, and he couldn't take all his time on one case; he needed help to prepare them all.

So we were out night and day interviewing people, lining them up, and trying to get additional evidence. Maybe a case was held to answer on very thin evidence. But it was enough to make a holding order. The municipal or the justice court felt that it was sufficient to warrant the man being held to answer for trial in superior court. Well, this meant we had to go out and try to find additional evidence, and we had to go and interview witnesses to pick up all loose ends.

We really built the case. The police departments made the initial arrest and thought that they had made the case when the defendants were held to answer. But actually we had much work to do to complete the case. Warren wasn't trying to make any kind of a record of convictions, but he didn't want to have a bad record in trying cases and losing too many. He was more interested in getting all the evidence and thereby fortifying the case and making sure the prosecution had a good case or dismiss it for lack of evidence, and not put the county to the expense of a trial where none was warranted. Mr. Warren wanted to make sure that it was properly handled so that it could be properly presented in court.

King: Did he set any kinds of standards here for the amount or quality of evidence? One of the things that constantly recurs in the literature is that he made very strong cases in court. What exactly does that mean?

Jahnsen: That's what I'm telling you. That was the reason for the additional investigative work on each case. This also resulted in many pleas of guilty. When the defense attorney discussed the case with the deputy DA he saw the hopelessness of trying to work up a defense against a strong case.

King: He really worked on these cases to be sure no person was tried that didn't deserve to be tried.

Jahnsen: Oh, yes, we worked on these. When it became very obvious that we were going to have to go back into the enforcement field, then Mr. Warren went to the board of supervisors and asked for additional money, and more positions.

EARL WARREN AS DISTRICT ATTORNEY

How Warren Became District Attorney

Jahnsen: I want to digress here, because you asked me how did I get my appointment, and I didn't cover that question.

Going back to the time when I was a U.S. Internal Revenue Agent enforcing the Prohibition laws, raiding and arresting bootleggers and crooked rabbis, a Mr. Garfinkel and some of the others representing themselves as rabbis, were bootleggers. I worked closely with the district attorney's office with Captain George Helms. Ezra Decoto was DA at that time. This was about the time Mr. Decoto was appointed to the California Railroad Commission.

I will digress a little here and tell you how Mr. Warren selected me to be a member of his staff, after he became DA. Mr. Warren, who was an assistant district attorney wanted to be appointed in Decoto's place, and so did Frank Shay, the other assistant district attorney.

The board of supervisors, who made the appointment, at that time consisted of Bill Hamilton of Alameda, Charles Heyer of Hayward, Ralph Richmond of Pleasanton, Redmond Staats of Berkeley and John Mullins of Oakland and Emeryville. Bill Hamilton was also secretary of the Moose Club. Hamilton was very close to Mike Kelly, a political boss in the Bay Area.

King: He was a Kelly man? So was John Mullins, wasn't he?

Jahnsen: Yes.

Jahnsen: When it came time for the board of supervisors to fill the vacancy of the district attorney, I'm satisfied that Frank Shay thought that he had Hamilton, Mullins, and Staats, who also was a Kelly man. Now, Heyer and Richmond weren't--they were independent. I don't think they meant anything to Mike Kelly. Mike Kelly and Billy Fitzmaurice, who was an Oakland bank official--they were political bigwigs in the county, including the cities. Not so much in the lower county.

King: Livermore was too far.

Jahnsen: Well they didn't--I don't think it meant too much to them as Heyer and Richmond were too strong down there. I don't think they had much influence down there. They didn't have too many political connections there, as Heyer and Richmond had the political control.

Mike Kelly was the Republican political boss and was a friend of Hiram Johnson, a U.S. Senator. Senator Hiram Johnson arranged Kelly's appointment as director of the Mint in San Francisco. Hiram Johnson wasn't interfering too much in local politics, but Kelly was supporting Hiram Johnson through the Kelly machine.

Then came the question who Kelly wanted to fill the DA post left vacant by the appointment of Decoto to the Railroad Commission. Frank Shay and Earl Warren had been contacting the supervisors. Shay had promises from some supervisors and Warren also had promises. Mr. Warren's promises were with Heyer and Richmond, and also Hamilton. It was my understanding that Hamilton promised with no intention of fulfilling his promise. Hamilton told Mr. Warren that he would support him, which was not his intention as he was for Shay.

I further heard that one day Judge [Edward] Tyrrell, a friend of Mr. Warren, a very fine man--Mr. Mullins and Judge Tyrrell were very active in the Knights of Columbus. Mr. Mullins was later in the insurance business. Judge Tyrrell was a police court judge before he became a superior court judge.

When Warren was in the prosecuting attorney's office, a branch of the DA's office, I'm satisfied that Judge Tyrrell had become endeared to him. I don't think Warren realized this so much, but I think Tyrrell felt--not so much for the

Jahnsen: Tribune's sake--but for honesty's sake. He felt that Warren would be the best district attorney; that he wouldn't be under the control of Mike Kelly.

I don't think Tyrrell was too hot with Mike Kelly. I think there must have been something to cause this feeling. Now, this is purely surmise. Now, this is 1925!

King: I know. It makes sense, though.

Jahnsen: The next thing that happened, Judge Tyrrell came down one day and had a chat with Mr. Warren and asked him, "Who have you got?" "Well," he said, "I've got Bill Hamilton, I've got Ralph Richmond, and I have Charlie Heyer." And he said, "I'm satisfied." And he [Tyrrell] said, "Are you sure you have Bill Hamilton?" And he [Warren] said, "Well, yes." Tyrrell said, "Well, come along with me." Bear in mind now--I've heard this story, and have no reason to discount it. I was never told this by Mr. Warren.

They went over to the Moose Club, and I understand Mr. Hamilton was secretary to the club. He [Tyrrell] took Mr. Warren into the office and he said to Bill Hamilton, "Bill, who are you for?" Warren was right there, present and heard the conversation. Well, he [Hamilton] said, "Warren knows who I'm for. I've talked to him--he knows who I'm for." He [Tyrrell] says, "Why don't you tell Warren the truth, who you're for," Tyrrell said. "Tell him who you're for. What you're gonna do--tell him who you're for." Well he [Hamilton] says, "It's none of your business. I've talked to Warren, and we're all satisfied." He [Tyrrell] says, "Why don't you tell him you're for Frank Shay?"

So then he [Tyrrell] told Warren that Hamilton wasn't going to be for him--that he was just stringing him. Then it became a question--he only had two supervisors, Heyer and Richmond, then. Frank Shay had the majority vote, then. So--good thing. If it hadn't been for Tyrrell, Warren wouldn't have been district attorney.

Tyrrell and Warren had a talk with Johnny Mullins. Mullins and Tyrrell were very close. Johnny Mullins was a very honorable man, and so were his associates and they were for strict, good, honest government. So it wasn't any problem for Tyrrell to get Mullins to vote for Mr. Warren. So Judge Tyrrell, I think, was the deciding factor in Mr. Warren becoming the district attorney.

Jahnsen: When they voted, Warren was in. Hamilton and Staats were for Shay and Shay lost, which caused some feeling of course for the time being.

Anyway, this infuriated Kelly. So Kelly then decided he would get Mullins' scalp, because he felt Mullins double-crossed him and the party.

King: Let me just backtrack here a minute and ask you a question. You said earlier that Mullins and Kelly were Hiram Johnson men?

Jahnsen: Yes, I would say they were.

King: And yet, in the 1924 election, how did they vote? Did they all vote for Coolidge?

Jahnsen: 1926 election, you mean, don't you?

King: No, I mean in the national election. They're Hiram Johnson men, but they go for Coolidge? I mean nobody there goes for La Follette.

Jahnsen: You mean after Harding died?

King: Yes.

Jahnsen: I don't know, but I think they would have gone for Coolidge, because he was a Republican. It may not have been their choice, but they couldn't vote for La Follette.

King: I see. You mean you can be a progressive in California, but you can't be a progressive in the country?

Jahnsen: I don't think they were progressive Republicans in that sense. La Follette appeared to be pretty much on the left--Bob La Follette? I don't think they would have voted for him because he wouldn't have been in those days what one called a true Republican. Even if they believed Mr. Coolidge wasn't any heavyweight in their minds.

King: [Laughter] Coolidge was not any heavyweight!

Jahnsen: When Harding died, he became president, and I think they partly had to line up, because Mile Kelly needed the support for all these federal jobs. You see there were all these positions or

- Jahnsen: political jobs that Kelly had some say who would be appointed to them, and so he couldn't go. He no doubt would be thrown out anyway if La Follette got in.
- King: Now, did Mike Kelly later support Warren in the 1926 election?
- Jahnsen: No, I don't recall what he did there. I doubt it, but I wouldn't know that. He may have gone for Preston Higgins.
- King: I doubted it too, except for a man named Kingston, who was the county recorder and was interviewed when he was ninety-four years old--
- Jahnsen: Joe Kingston. I know him very well. He was a Mike Kelly man.
- King: He said that Kelly came out for Warren in some election and it just didn't make any sense.
- Jahnsen: I would say that maybe Mike Kelly, after he saw that his influence was gone, Warren would be the lesser of two evils-- along that line. But Joe Kingston was county clerk after George Gross died. Joe was there for a long time. A very nice fella.

These were all Mike Kelly men. Gross was a Mike Kelly man, Foss was, probably, as mostly all these people in the county clerk's office were Mike Kelly people.

Attempted Influence by a Bail Bond Broker

- King: Getting back, now, to Warren's appointment, you were telling me about how you joined the office.
- Jahnsen: Well, following this time, as I said, Mr. Warren knowing me, asked me one day to come over from San Francisco, and talk with him to find out if I would be interested in a position in the office. He told me, at this time, that if he got the appropriation that he hoped to get, and that he thought he would get, that he was going to put on some more men to help George Helms, his county detective, and that he would like to put me on, if I would like to come over.

Jahnsen: Of course I just jumped for joy! It was the thing I was looking for. I didn't tell him at the time that I wanted to study law. I wanted the job. I was getting \$175 a month as a government agent, and this was paying \$180 a month. I was living at home in Oakland, and I wasn't traveling all over the state, and I wasn't making all these liquor raids and getting involved as a witness in courts. I would be in a similar situation, but at home. This meant a lot to me, and I valued it very highly. Mr. Warren told me not to tell anybody.

Well, a situation developed that pretty near cost me, I would say, this appointment. At the time I was terribly upset about it.

We had these bailbond brokers, Meyers, Rohan and Osgood, and they were much in control and influence through their associations with underworld characters, and were involved in one thing and another. However, you couldn't probably prove these things.

One day I was coming down from the Seventh Street local station from San Francisco, and I walked down Washington Street to the old court house and the district attorney's office--this was before I got the job--I did this many times. I would have to pass by Rohan's office. Jack Rohan was known as "Full Sack Jack" in the ads that he had on the trucks for Rohan's Coal Company. His office was on Washington Street between Fifth and Sixth Streets. He called me into his office for a discussion.

Some months before [that] an Oakland police officer was shot in north Oakland, and it developed that this fellow was shot over a raid of a liquor storage place--some smuggling deal--and he got, somehow or other, a little too far into this outfit. Not criminally, but was investigating, and he was shot. I don't know whether they ever convicted the man who shot him or not. They probably did, though. He was shot, it was claimed, as a suspect, as a burglar, or some other thing they happened to frame up.

The fella that was active as a smuggler in this was named Serpa Sam Terry. Serpa Sam Terry was a one-armed man. Now I knew Terry--I knew him from smuggling days when I was on the smuggling detail as a government agent. I had raided him.

Jahnsen: Shortly after this shooting, we went to his place and got all the liquor. I don't think we arrested Terry at that time. I don't think we could prove he was the owner. But anyway, he had another place down near Emeryville, and we raided this also, and seized a lot of smuggled liquor.

Just following this, I think it was, only a month or so, I got a mysterious 'phone call about two o'clock in the morning. It was an anonymous call--a man calling and asking me who I was. I told him my name and he said "I've just talked to Shurtleff, another agent, and I'm not getting any assistance. I have some information about a landing of liquor." He used this other agent's name, who was later convicted--associated with Becker. He said, "I know that you're on a smuggler's detail, and if you go right down to the foot of Fourteenth Street, the Union Construction Company, you can catch a landing of liquor." He made some mention [of] who the outfit was--I don't recall now. But anyway he said, "But you have to go right away."

Well, I immediately called up the agent in charge and told him what I'd heard. He said, "Well, I haven't any way of getting anybody to help you." His name was Padget. "Why don't you see if you can get some help from the police department and go down there?"

I telephoned the Northern Police Station and talked to Lieutenant Bert Curtis--this man that I had mentioned before--and he said, "Well, you go down to the Central Station and I'll get the captain down there, and we'll have somebody for you."

So I went down there. They had a man there by the name of Dan Fleming waiting for me. Dan was a patrolman, a big Irishman.

I said, "I don't think we're enough to go down and knock this landing off, there's just two of us." He said, "That's all right. They put out a call." He said, "We'll go down to the Sixteenth Street station, and there'll be a patrolman named Kobab waiting for us. I'm sure they'll get him." We went down, and sure enough Kobab was there.

They got in my car and we drove down, out this old wharf near the Sixteenth Street depot and out Fourteenth Street to the Union Construction Company, and drove in there. The first



Oscar Jahnsen, right, about to take axe to still during a Prohibition raid. At left is District Attorney Earl Warren and Captain of Inspectors George Helms.



Oscar Jahnsen during a raid on a Chinese lottery operation, about 1926 or 1927. He is adjusting the door to prevent it from locking. Note his deputy sheriff's badge.



Oscar Jahnsen hammering an abatement notice on a bootleg joint, 1920s. Sign indicates violation of National Prohibition Act, Red Light Abatement Act (County), and Narcotics Abatement Act.



Oscar Jahnsen at age 17 in naval uniform.

Jahnsen: one we arrested was a fellow by the name of Rollins--he was the night watchman. Now they couldn't land in there without this watchman being in with the smugglers, so we took Rollins into custody. I took his gun away from him, and he got all excited. We saw some trucks there, so we felt pretty much assured that the arrest would be a good one.

We put him in the back of the car and Kobab sat in the car as a guard. We blocked the road with the automobile. Dan Fleming and I knew the layout of the ship yard, having been several times before. The yard had four building ways. No ships were being built, and the ways were open and clear. We went down in the middle part of the four ways, two ways on both sides of us. In this area were boxes of nuts and bolts and boxes of many other items. So we had plenty of cover.

There was a truck down at the end of this area near the water and the lights weren't on, but you could hear talking down there. You could hear the engine of a boat near the truck. So we went down there in the direction of the truck and the boat, and sure enough we cornered and arrested three men.

We pretty near had a shooting there. I shined my flashlight on the truck and a man in the truck, and Dan Fleming went down waving his flashlight, and saying, "Ship ahoy! Ship ahoy!" I had a Springfield rifle, and I was standing covering Dan, as we were going down. They turned the truck lights on, and they saw this police officer with his star on his uniform. There was a lot of commotion then, men running and the boat engine speeding up.

We called for them to halt. I hollered out, "Hey you men over there, we have them over here." I hollered at nobody, but just to make it appear that there were other officers surrounding the ways. Calling for them to cut off the avenues of escape, cut them off on the other side. I gave a lot of commands to different imaginary people running around, and I said, "You fellas, (the smugglers) don't move, because if you do, you're surrounded. If you fire a shot you're gonna get killed." And so we cut them all off. We heard the boat going out of the harbor. There was just the two of us!

We then went down and arrested these three people, and locked them up. Their names were Kelly, Sasso, and Lucas. They and Rollins, the guard, were later tried in the federal

Jahnsen: court and convicted. And we seized three hundred and eighty sacks of Canadian liquor, besides the trucks.

King: You never found out who the mysterious 'phone call was from?

Jahnsen: Yes I did later. That's what I'm coming to.

I didn't know at the time who that call was from. Now I'll connect the story and tell you how I found out who it was. On this particular day while I was on my way down from the train and Jack Rohan was standing out in front of the store, he called me in. I'd already raided these other places that belong to Sam Terry.

Now, a smuggler is in a position to know what other smugglers are doing and when the mother ship is arriving to make deliveries to one group or another. They would know what boats the others are using and could give details as to time and places where they were landing. I felt some of the agents operating in San Francisco had contacts that advised them as to smugglers' landings and how to catch them, but I never knew who these contacts were.

I was a little suspicious of some agents and how they operated. They would take us on a wild goose chase. They would get us out of the San Francisco area. They would lead us some place else, and the first thing you know the smugglers would land some place else in the San Francisco area.

It appeared that they knew each other, and they would know what and where the landings were going to be made, and how much stuff was to be landed. The big liquor ships that would come down from Canada, they had different ships outside the twelve mile limit. These boats would be out there, and they knew who they belonged to. They'd know just where they were gonna unload.

So on the occasion that Jack Rohan asked me if I wouldn't come into the office, he wanted to talk to me. He said, "Where are you going?" I said, "I'm going over to the district attorney's office." I had some things to do over there.

"Well," he said, "Mr. Jahnsen, I want to tell you that Mr. Osgood and Mr. Meyers and I think you're a pretty honest man, and we like you and we don't want to see you get in any trouble.

Jahnsen: If you should get into any trouble, we want you to know that we'd be glad to put up bonds for you and it wouldn't cost you anything--wouldn't cost you a cent. We'd be glad to help you out."

Rohan was a very shrewd guy. "I just wanted to let you know that we're your friend. You've made a lot of arrests here, and appeared in a lot of cases, and we've seen no reason to doubt your honesty, your ability, and your integrity, and we want you to know we're on your side. That's just between us."

So I said, "Well, I sure appreciate that, Mr. Rohan, but I hope I never have to call on you. I don't intend to get into any trouble; that's not my way of thinking, and I don't want to become involved in anything that would get me in trouble." So I said, "I have other ideas for the future. I want to study law and be a lawyer."

He said, "Incidentally, do you remember getting a call one morning about the raid that you made down at the Union Construction Company?" Now they (Rohan, Osgood and Meyers) put the bail up for those people. "Seizing all that liquor down there some time ago?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "Do you know who called you?"

I said, "No, I don't. I haven't the least idea. I've often wondered."

He said, "Well, I know this fella very well and he can give you a lot of information and you can knock off a lot of the opposition to his group."

Now the idea was, as I was saying, the people in San Francisco could decide to put you on a wild goose chase--this happened to me! At one time they sent us to Half Moon Bay. We came back to San Francisco with nothing showing up, and we, the other agents with me, went down at the Golden Gate ferry dock and we arrested some smugglers right there.

So these agents, who were in the know, and who knocked off the opposition to the sources that give them the information,

Jahnsen: had the influence to get the agents out of San Francisco, could draw all the agents--we only had thirty-five agents. They could draw all the agents out of the area where the landings were to be made by their contacts. Some agents had contacts with bootlegging wineries who made wine deliveries to the Bay Area. They could draw us all out of town, and they could leave San Francisco wide open. They landed right down in the area of the Ferry Building.

King: Fantastic!

Jahnsen: They landed right at the Golden Gate Ferry, at the foot of Hyde Street, when we made this arrest and seizure of the liquor and boat. They, the other agents, had taken us out of town. I later became suspicious that they knew what they were doing so this landing could be made. There were few agents we could trust on the smuggling detail and we would take the information given to us by the other agents, but we would not tell them where we would be working. That is how we came on the Golden Gate Ferry seizure.

So on this occasion he [Rohan] told me about this fellow [who] could give me a lot of information. I asked if I knew him. He said, "No, I don't think you do." Well, I didn't ask him if he was a smuggler, but I don't know how he could get the information unless he was a smuggler.

So Rohan said, "This man is going to call you again, and I'd like to have you talk to him." Now, Rohan was just going to go my bonds for me if I get into trouble, and he knew I was honest, and everything else, but he still wanted me to talk to this fellow, but he didn't give me his name or tell me who he was or his business.

I got the phone call. The fellow told me that he would like to talk to me but he didn't want to come to my house. He said, "I don't want to be seen associating with you. I don't want to get involved in anything, but I'll be glad to give you the information that comes to me.

Now, I knew the Ku Klux Klan was doing this, too. I knew they'd give you very good information. I knew other people who had reason to give me very reliable information, so I couldn't be sure just who this man was.

Jahnsen: He wanted to know where he could meet me, and I said, "Well, I'm not too far from this College of Arts and Crafts where Broadway and College Avenue goes together. I'll meet you up in front of the College of Arts and Crafts, but how will I know you?" He says, "You stand out there," and he says, "If I blink my lights two or three times and park, you just stand right out by the entrance and be there in half an hour, and I'll go by and I'll blink my lights, and I'll park and you can come up and if I call you by name you'll know me, and it'll be fine."

Sure enough, I stood there and this fellow went by, parked his car, and blinked the lights. I went and got in the car, and I looked in the car first, sized the car all up, because I didn't know whether I was going to get in and get knocked off right there! I saw nobody else in the car. I opened the door and looked in the back, and he said, "Nobody-- I'm alone. Get in." I got in, and he drove around, and then I noticed he only had one arm. So then I knew he was Serpia Sam Terry. I never said a word.

He told me that he'd phoned me and he gave me this information about the Union Construction Company. He said, "Now, I'm in a position to know where all these people are going to land. I know that if I tell you, and you can knock off those I tell you about, it's going to help my business. It's going to make it tougher to get liquor and I'm going to have more clients, and going to bring in more stuff. Then you'll have the influence-- like I know some of those fellows over there in San Francisco are being handled by Parenti and the Swedes and these other groups, and I know they're feeding this information to other agents and I know they fed it on me. If they can control the agents by this means, then they can control the landing ports. If you can say you know at a certain time, at a certain place, there's going to be a landing--fine! You'll get it. I'll give you factual information. You can let me know where they're gonna go, and I'll land."

I said, "Wait a minute, wait a minute." "Well," he said, "You don't have to tell me anything. I'll take my chances, see?" He said, "I'll tell you, we land 10,000 cases a month, and we'll give you a dollar a case." I said, "That's a lot of money, but I'm not interested. Mr. Terry, I'll be willing to take the information, and you take your chances. But I'm not interested in your money offer. I'm glad to know you gave me that information-- where it came from, but I'm not interested at all in your

Jahnsen: proposition. Will you let me out?" He let me out at the corner of Fifty-sixth and Telegraph by Idora Park.

He said, "Well, you're married and got a couple of kids. Here." You know, unconsciously, if I do this to you [gesture of tossing something], you'll reach your hand out. He said, "Here," and he handed me a roll of bills. I said, "You son-of-a-bitch," and I threw the bills back at him into the car. I said, "Now I will be after you. Now I will be on you, and I'll make every effort to knock you over. You're going to take your chances, boy, and they're gonna be chances. We'll get information on you, and don't you worry, you'll get it!"

This is the last I saw of the fellow. About a week or two later I walk down Washington Street again, and Mr. Rohan was out there again. It was his habit to stand out in front of his place of business to sun himself. He used to wear a grey sweater and a little black hat with the crown down and the brim turned up. He always sounded [like] a very pleasant sort of a fella, and he said, "Hey, Oscar--I want to talk to you. I think you made a big mistake." I said, "What do you mean?"

He said, "Well, I think you made a mistake. This fellow didn't want to bribe you." I said, "Not very much." He said, "Oh, no, no, no. You wouldn't have had to worry. Nothing would happen to you. There'd be no way anyone would know he helped you." I said, "I told the man I'd take the information, but I didn't want nothing to do with him. I didn't want any part of him."

Terry had his home all fixed up with an electric burglar alarm system around the windows and doors. These men were--you could call them the Mafia if you wanted. They could do whatever they wanted to, they were Italian, and he was a tough guy, and a rough guy, too. So I didn't want any part of these people. Arresting them, sure, I didn't worry about that. But I wasn't going to have them pay me or give me anything of value, and then I'd be double-crossed and get involved and go to jail or maybe killed. I had a wife and two children, and I didn't want to go to the penitentiary. I wasn't raised that way.

So, I told Mr. Rohan. I wasn't gonna be in this business too much longer. I was going to try to get into the district attorney's office. I said, "I'd like to be in there as I want to study law, and I want to get out of the enforcement business."

Jahnsen: So it wouldn't do any good anyway, no matter what happened. I don't want any part of this." I said I'm sorry if I hurt his feelings, but it's all right--I don't want any part of it.

He said, "You want to get over here with Pinky Warren? I got some good connections." Mr. Warren had already told me I had the job when it opens up, but I didn't mention this to him. "Well," he said, "Come along with me." I said, "Mr. Rohan, I've got to go over here to the office and there are people waiting for me." He said, "It'll only take a minute. I want to take you and introduce you to a friend of mine." I thought, "Oh, what can I say now. I was told by Mr. Warren not to mention this."

Well I went along to see who his friend was. I didn't see where it could do any harm to go over. I didn't have to do anything, and I was going to tell Mr. Warren everything that happened. I opened my big mouth by saying I hoped to get in the district attorney's office. I didn't say I had the appointment, or anything else, or I was promised any job. He said to me, "I want you to meet the man that's responsible for putting Earl Warren in that job. He is Johnny Mullins. He's obligated to me."

Now Rohan was a Mike Kelly man, and Mullins was a Mike Kelly man. So he took me over to the board of supervisors' offices. He went into the board of supervisors' room and they were in session. He went over and asked Mr. Mullins to come outside a minute. I stood out in the hall. He come out and he said, "Johnny, I want you to meet Oscar Jahnsen, a good friend of mine. He is an honest, sincere, dedicated person. I'd like to have you put him in the district attorney's office. Now, you know Pinky Warren, and he's obligated to you. You'd do us a big favor if you'd put him in the office."

I said, "Well, Mr. Mullins, please, I don't think it's necessary. I just would appreciate meeting you, but I just don't want you to do anything. I don't want to get involved in any politics." Mullins never said a word. He said, "Okay, Jack!" like that. So we left. He [Rohan] said, "Don't worry. He'll take care of it. He owes me plenty."

I went across to the district attorney's office and the first thing I wanted to get ahold of Mr. Warren. Well, I couldn't see him. He was in trying a case, and I had a job

Jahnsen: to go on. I couldn't wait. I made up my mind the next time I come over I'd make an appointment to see him.

But in the interim I got a call from George Helms who said he'd like to see me. I went over and then he said, "The chief would like to see you." He called the district attorney, "the chief." "He'd like to have you go in and see him." I went in.

Mr. Warren said, "Sit down." I sat down and he said to me, "Gee, I thought I'd cautioned you and told you not to tell anybody about offering you this position. It all hinges on whether I get this appropriation or not. But it wasn't necessary for you to go to Jack Rohan and ask Jack Rohan to help you. I'm the one that makes the appointment, not Jack Rohan."

I said, "Well, Mr. Warren, I tried to see you right after this incident--" and so I told him the story. I said, "I was upset about it, and it bothered me and it worried me, and I came to see you and you weren't available and this is it! I don't know what to say."

"Well," he says, "He probably will call you up, if we get the appointments I ask for. He'll probably tell you he landed the job for you. But all I want you to do is to tell him what a no good so-and-so he is and that he had nothing to do with it, and that you didn't want to have anything to do with him, and that he better just forget the whole deal--that you had this appointment long before, and that if he wants any verification of this he can call me and I'll be glad to tell him!" He told me to tell him in some other language--and Mr. Warren very seldom swears--the kind of a man he thought he was and the type of influence he had, and so forth.

The appointment came through when they got the appropriation, I think it was about the 24th day of July in 1925.

King: By this time Warren has started to--

Jahnsen: At this time he had the appointment, he was now reorganizing the office; he kept everybody in that was in there. This was the new budget, and the new money in the 1925 fiscal year.

King: Yes. Well when does he go after the bail bonds people? Is it the following year?

Jahnsen: It's after that.

King: It's the following May.

Jahnsen: Yes. Then, just as Mr. Warren said, the phone rang, and it was Mr. Rohan. "Well, Oscar," he said, "I landed the job for you! Mullins came through fine, you got the job, and what I'd like to have you do now is the first chance you get come in and sit down. I'd like to talk to you. I'll give you a few pointers about how things are run around here. I want you to know that we want to help you and everything else, and I'm sure glad you got it. This shows you what influence is, and the politics are, and so forth, and I'll be able to help you."

I said, "Well, Mr. Rohan, just a minute, just a minute. I hate to tell you this, but I told Mr. Warren what took place and how this happened, you taking me to see Mr. Mullins. I'd already been promised that job and that's the reason I told you I didn't want to go over to see Mr. Mullins, and that's the reason I told Mr. Mullins not to do anything about it. I just want to tell you that Mr. Warren told me to tell you that you had no influence in his office, and that any time you thought you did, you better see him. That his appointments are his own, not Mike Kelly's or not yours or anybody else's. He had some choice words for you, and he says he would suggest that you call him up, if you want anything more about it."

So he hung up the 'phone. This was okay. I told Mr. Warren. He laughed about it.

Well, I went to work there, on the 25th day of July. During this time Mr. Warren had to make some sort of a record for himself in a short period of time. This appointment wasn't too long before the next election and his first run as district attorney.

King: Because he had to run for election.

Jahnsen: Yes, he had to run. He had to do a lot to get public attention, and to change public thinking from the previous administration.

The Oakland Bail Bond Scandal

Jahnsen: So then the time came when we investigated the bail bond brokers. Now, they had a good deal of influence in some of the courts about putting up bail and bonds, not being forfeited when the defendant failed to appear. They were granted long stays.

It was customary--it wasn't dishonest--that if the bail bond broker put up bail for somebody, or bonds--in those days they dealt with the Liberty Bonds--and these fellas were very wealthy. I don't know how much money--hundreds of thousands of dollars. They had these World War I Liberty Bonds; instead of carrying cash, they would just put up bonds. They had a standing account, you might say, with the county treasury. They would have this money on deposit, like they would have in a bank. They were drawing interest on the bonds itself, and they had to have the bonds, and they were face value.

If they had a client needing bonds, say about \$10,000 in bonds, maybe they had \$500,000 on deposit. I don't know. This was what I understood. When they'd take a man out of jail, there was no question the bonds were up, because all they would do would give the court clerk the serial numbers of the bonds, and the man was released. Now when the man would disappear, never show up for trial, it was incumbent upon the court to revoke the bail or the bonds. Well, they seldom did.

As a result there were a lot of people who were out on bail, fugitives from justice, and their bail wasn't being forfeited. This was simply because some of the judges, it seemed, were sympathetic to these people. These bail bond brokers stood in pretty well with them.

The bail bond brokers weren't what you call dishonest men. They were gougers, but they weren't considered dishonest men. Osgood owned that big Osgood drugstore. Charlie Meyers was a wealthy bail bond broker. I don't think he committed any criminal acts; however, when he died he left a lot of money in his will. Many people were scared to death their name would be in the will. If their name was in his will, people would have suspicions on you.

But anyway, they had money on deposit, so the judge could have revoked the bail, and the county treasury would have to

Jahnsen: take that money that was on deposit and turn it in to the court clerk. Courts took this action a lot of times in other places, in other counties and communities.

Well, let's say you and I went bonds for somebody, and they skipped out, well, maybe we put up our homes as collateral. Well, this would be a terrible thing to take our homes. Maybe they'd give us a chance to find the person, and get him back, instead of revoking the bond and we lose our home.

Well, the bail bond brokers in many of these cases put up the bonds and the court would allow time for them to produce the person in court. They were having private investigators trying to locate these people so they could surrender them. They'd have them arrested in another state, or wherever they located them, then they had to get them extradicted to get them back to free that bond. Some of them come back voluntarily, but not very many of them. So this was the bail bond broker's problem to get them back. Time was granted them for this purpose.

There was another side to this, too. If you and I wanted to go bail for somebody, and we didn't have the money, we would go to the bail bond broker and we would give him a deed for our home for collateral, or we would put up property or other things that we had, and we give them a lien on it, or first-call on the property. We would, you might say, deposit our home, or put our collateral up. Without this type of transaction with the bail broker we couldn't afford to pay the bail bond broker his fee, which ran up very high.

King: They would take title to the property.

Jahnsen: They would liable [attach] our home, or they would use this property as payment of the lost bond that they said was forfeited to the court and their fee. They would sell it right out from under a person. Many of these poor people couldn't do anything.

King: Why is this not criminal? I understand your distinction that they're gougers, and that it's not criminal, but I don't really understand why.

Jahnsen: Well, this was the individual. Let me put it another way now. Let's say that--

King: You mean there was nothing so illegal that you could really tag them on it?

Jahnsen: They weren't violating any law. Supposing you charged something downtown at one of the big stores and you had a lot of charge accounts, and the first thing you know they turned the charge accounts over to a collection agency. The collection agency, then, finds out that you have certain properties. What they would do, they get a listing of your property, and they file suit against you, and they put an attachment against your property. So you either pay or you lose your property, unless it's homesteaded. Well, this is a similar way.

The Warren Family and Matt Warren's Murder

Jahnsen: I want to go back now in this thing here, because in thinking over the years, you wonder, as I said to you at lunch, what made Mr. Warren operate the way he did. What caused this man with all of this corruption and stuff going on--what was underneath? What motivated his thinking to clean up the corruption and operate like he did along this line?

Well, I knew his father and mother, not too well, but I knew them. I knew his sister, Ethel, very well, and had many, many talks. She went to Europe with several of us, and she was dependent upon me a lot. She had confidence in me and told me many things.

I remember some of the things that she told me about her father; about the hard time they had when he was working for the railroad, and how they were hard up against it; and how he was sort of a disciplinarian, but a good father. That their father and mother were very honorable and Mr. Warren was a very good man, and I'm sure he was. I think this was how Earl Warren got this background, and these fundamentals of honesty and integrity.

I don't think Matt Warren would have been killed if he had been an ordinary type of a man. I don't think he would have been murdered if he had not been too trusting and kind to people. He was very fair in his dealings and very trusting of everyone, not a suspicious person.

Jahnsen: The situation as far as Matt Warren was concerned--he was a man that had a hard life. He worked his way up, he was of Norwegian ancestry and his wife was of Swedish descent, and they were hard-working people and led an honest life. Ethel was telling me about some of the trouble with the railroad strikes and how he stood with the men because he felt their cause was just and right, and how he went out on strike with them and the problems they suffered as the result. He became master mechanic for the Southern Pacific.

 In the meantime he acquired little pieces of property. He figured that was good security. He bought a little old house, and fixed it up--he'd do these things. He would counsel both Ethel and Earl about their lives. He wanted them to have a good education, something that he was deprived of, more or less. This is Ethel's story to me. He felt that Earl should have a college education, and he should be interested in music. Many things that he felt that he should be doing. He lived by certain principle of what was right.

 He encouraged Earl along these lines. He felt that any spare time that Earl had he ought to be out trying to make a few dollars, that he ought to have a paper route. In fact he had a donkey, and he used to deliver papers. Everything that he did, he had to do it with the idea of knowing the value of a dollar. Education meant the main thing.

 When Earl became district attorney his mother had her eyes operated on. She had cataracts. As I said earlier, if his mother hadn't of been up with Earl and Ethel for the eye operation and had been at home that night, probably his father wouldn't have been killed. If Matt Warren didn't have to look after his business affairs he would have been with his wife in Oakland, staying with Ethel during these operations.

 But, again, being an honest individual, and a dedicated man, when the crash came, in '29, they practically lost everything. His properties weren't doing very good, so he had an arrangement, as I understand it, with the banks, that he could sit there and work the property problems out, and gradually pay off the bank loans. It was better than the bank taking them over. He could work it out, and he would work it out.

 Now, he rented a lot of these places, but the rents weren't very much, and a lot of people were out of work, and they couldn't afford to pay rent, but he didn't throw them out. He

Jahnsen: felt that they had to have a place to live. He felt if he could stay there, because if some of the renters got a job for two or three dollars or five dollars that day, and he had a family to support, he would come over and say, "Mr. Warren, I can only give you fifty cents or a dollar on the rent," he would agree to accept the amount. He would be there to assist these people and take care of the bank's interest and his own.

He had a little cabinet in the dining room in that little old house on Baker Street. He had a jar which he kept change and money in, and then he kept a book and receipts of monies paid. He'd give a fellow credit for half a dollar, or a dollar or five dollars, whatever it was on the rent, but he felt he had to stay there and protect their interest. He knew Mrs. Warren, his wife, was safe with Ethel and Earl. He neglected going up and being with his family which he would like to do, but he felt he was obligated to pay off that property, and he should be there and not let some of the renters go by the next week or a month. Then they would get further behind in their payments. Some of them would pay maybe half a month's rent. He was there to collect it, as he was the one that did the bookkeeping, the only one who knew what was due from each one, so he had to be there.

His custom was that people used to come in at ten and eleven o'clock at night, normally up to ten o'clock. He would sit in a big, overstuffed leather chair. He had a little gas range in front of him, and he had a light cord with one of these triple sockets, and he had lights in each of the sockets. He'd sit there and read. Some people'd come to the front door, or they'd come to the back door. He never got up to see. He trusted everyone, fearing none.

That's how he was killed. The murderer came in the back way and slugged him with an iron pipe he picked up in the rear of the yard next door. I feel sure he thought it was somebody coming to pay the rent, or one of his workmen. They all knew his habits, that of sitting in the big chair every night reading. He would sit there at night time, and for his after dinner snack he'd have a bowl of cereal and some milk before retiring for the night. He liked to read.

Jahnsen: Sometimes he'd go across the street to a place on the corner. They had a little piece of property over there which was a little ice cream soda or milkshake stand. He'd go over there and get a milkshake. Drink it there, or he'd take it home and drink it at home.

Had he not been up against the financial situation, due to the crash, and had he not been so dedicated and wanting to do the right thing toward the banks and his family and everyone else, he would have been up there with his wife. But unfortunately he was that kind of a man and I think that was one reason the murderer could take advantage of him, because they knew nobody was there, except him. It was somebody that knew his habits and the fact his wife was away and he was alone in the house.

I think the life he led and the counseling, and the integrity and the honesty and the principle of that man was inculcated in Earl Warren. I think he just became part and parcel of this type of life. He didn't want anything that didn't belong to him, but he wanted everything that was his. He wanted to be honest, he wanted to be charitable. He was very charitable with these people, and very honest with them.

I think Earl Warren grew up that way. I think that he felt that there was this principle, as we mentioned earlier. He felt that doing right would never end in wrong, that he wanted to do right.

Warren's Modus Operandi

Jahnsen: Now, along that same line of thinking, when we went around enforcing the law during the early days of Earl Warren as district attorney, we had a wide-open county. Bootleggers, and Chinese lotteries, and gamblers and prostitutes, and everything operating in the city of Emeryville, and in the county as those crimes were legal in the city of Oakland and some of the other cities.

He thought that we should never sneak up on the blind side of anybody. He'd never take unfair advantage of anybody. He said that those operators of the bootlegging, gamblers, and other law violators, should be put on notice to quit their operations and that the open county and cities policies were over. This is another proof of his fairness. That is why he could go to the top, because he was honest and fair and not

Jahnsen: taking advantage of those who felt they were operating with the consent of the law enforcement authorities. He ordered us to go through the county and tell the punch board operators, the bingo operators and even the charitable groups not to violate the law. Many candy stores and cigar stores had them, and bars had them, and lunch counters had punch boards, and churches had them, and bingo. Charitable bazaars had them. None were exempt.

We went around and we notified every owner and every operator that this was a violation of the laws, and that they could be arrested, they could be prosecuted and go to jail and pay a heavy fine. Mr. Warren told us to tell them that the district attorney said, 'Now take them out, turn them back to whoever you got them from; we won't arrest you, we won't take you into custody, we won't seize the property or do anything now. We went around two or three times and notified them, just to prove that we were not taking unfair advantage of these operators. Well it got so they felt, 'Well, the district attorney is just kidding us. They wouldn't dare to enforce these laws.'

So he finally said, 'Well the day has come, now, when you must go out and arrest everybody violating the law. We've notified them. They have had plenty of opportunity, plenty of chances.'

Well, the same fairness was given and warnings issued before we took over the gambling ships in Southern California. He gave them five days' notice to voluntarily abate those places and bring their ships in. If they couldn't bring them in because they didn't have the money to pay the towing fees, he told them the state would pay to tow them in, and they could try out the legal aspects in court, and if they lost, they lost the property. If they won the suit, the state would tow the boats out there again and they could go ahead and operate.

This is what he did. He notified them. Then he got injunctions out against them. Well, I've known of many cases where no notices were ever given before action was taken.

Well, another incident happened one time, and Warren Olney, I'm sure, can verify this. We were much interested in the operation of the bookmakers. They had leased wires all through the United States, and they'd have peek houses at the race track,

Jahnsen: and a fellow could sit in the peek house and over a microphone in front of him and a large telescope view all the races at the track and give all the information through the wire service to all the pool rooms. This was done by passing the information to a distribution center who relayed it to the phone outlets. They would put the information over a telephone and it would go to certain places in a city, county or state headquarters in these places. They had lease-lines all over the United States.

This would be boomed into other 'phones and microphones, and enlarged and it'd be transmitted to all the bookies or pool rooms. As the horse was running, this fellow would be telling the listeners what the actions of the horses and betting odds were like "at the quarter so-and-so is running at first, so-and-so is coming up on the inside." You could go to a pool room, or one of these places where the betting was, and you could visualize or see mentally everything going on. They didn't have television, but you could visualize what was happening. You put your money up with a bookmaker, see?

Well, when it come time to knock these over, they were told to stop their operations. If not we would shut all the wire services off in the state and we were going to sue the telephone company for furnishing service for an illegal operation.

During this period of time, Warren Olney in his search of the boundary lines between California and the states and Mexico-- Instead of running through the middle of Lake Tahoe, like a lot of people thought, some of these old surveys showed that a lot of these places over in Nevada were in California. As a matter of fact, in the Arizona case, where the state was suing the telephone company, the Colorado River shifts down there, and Yuma, Arizona--at one time part of it's in California, at another time it's in Arizona.

So when we found that the telephone company was operating in California, at this period of time, this was brought to the telephone company's attention by Warren Olney and those that were working on it from the legal point of view. Sam Wright, who was the legal representative for the telephone company, agreed to these findings: that telepone company was an associate company and had to discontinue their phone service, or they would have been indicted. Now that was because of this same thing, the old surveys.

Jahnsen: When we went to Attorney General Warren and told him-- I remember sitting there--Warren Olney and I were very excited. We were going to close all these joints over in Nevada, Arizona and other places. Not all of them, but the ones that we could prove were connected and in California. A place over there called Cal-Neva, there's a line right down through the center that says California-Nevada; the gambling was over on the Nevada side of the line, over there it's California.

So, what did he do? Attorney General Warren said, 'Well, listen! Haven't you fellas got more to do than to think up such ideas. Where's your thinking? What's the matter with you? Is there something wrong with you? You people talk about coordinating this work of law enforcement--you can't even coordinate yourselves. What's wrong with you?'

We looked kinda flabbergasted. He says, "Everybody over there operating think they're operating legally. They believe they're operating legally. Now what about all of the suits that have been filed in Nevada, judgements given and cases settled, and you claim it's California. What about all of the litigation? And what about the Supreme Court? What are they gonna do? Where are we gonna be? How many cases are gonna have to be retried? All the wills that have been settled, all the probate matters, how are you gonna prove this? Why," he said, "this is the most ridiculous thing! Why don't you fellas go out and think up something better than that." Along that line. He didn't use those exact words, but it was so obvious, to him.

Now he didn't only do that in these cases. In many other cases where he went out, he gave people advance notice before action was taken. In all these cases he felt that the operators thought they were operating legally. He told them what would happen if they didn't quit their illegal operations. He didn't lie to them. He did what he told them he was going to do.

King: Did he discuss these things with the people in the office? Did you have some staff meetings about them?

Jahnsen: Well, coming to this now. This office was divided into several sections. We had what was known as the criminal and the civil divisions, and then we had the inspectors and the investigators. In the criminal department he held office meetings on a certain day, afternoon or on a certain morning.

Jahnsen: He kept right on top of what was going on. He was a terrific administrator. He kept on top and he knew every case that was going on. He did this in all departments. He did it with the legal staff who handled the board of education, because he was the legal adviser to the board of education and the board of supervisors.

All these things were discussed, and it was brought out what action should be taken. You better lay it on the line, and you caught hell if you were asleep on the job. Any cases that were hanging fire, that were put over for some reason, or if somebody wasn't on the job--boy! You got it. It never happened again.

King: Did he allow debate about these things? That is, could you disagree with him about the line to take?

Jahnsen: Oh sure. You could disagree with him. I don't think he'd ever admit that he was wrong! I don't ever remember him doing that, but he would listen to you. He would recognize your thinking, and reasoning and credit what you said.

One time we had a new auto laundry start up out in north Oakland by the Technical High School, Pacific-Gillespie system, and we had our cars assigned to us. They told us that if we'd bring our cars in to get them washed, why it wouldn't cost us anything. When I went to Warren to tell him about this thing, he said, "Oscar, do you ever get anything for nothing?" I said, "Well, it doesn't cost us anything." He said, "Well, I didn't ask you-- Did you ever get anything for nothing?" And I said, "Well, no." Mr. Warren said, "You never know some day we may have to try one of these people and we may find ourselves making enemies and be charged with the complaint of injuring some of our friends. He added, "If you or the county garage can't wash the car, let it go dirty, but not let us be in the position of taking things."

Organization of the Office
(Interview 2, July 2, 1970)

Jahnsen: The district attorney's office is divided into two sections. You have the criminal and you have the civil divisions.

King: Is this always true, or did Warren make those distinctions?

Jahnsen: No, this is generally true, except in a couple of other counties. In San Francisco you have City and County, and in Los Angeles you have the City of Los Angeles and the County of Los Angeles. So they are a little different in arrangement.

Now, for instance, in San Francisco, you have the City and County together. The city and the county limits are the same.

King: That's right. They're coterminus.

Jahnsen: The district attorney is the criminal prosecutor. The civil department is not part of the district attorney's office. The city attorney handles the civil matters. They have no working relationships. One has all the civil work, the other the criminal work.

The sheriff doesn't do any of the police work in the city and county, the police department does this. The sheriff acts as a representative of the court. He serves all the court processes. He houses the prisoners in the county jail.

In the County of Alameda the district attorney did both civil and criminal work.

King: It's county.

Jahnsen: It's county. But now they've changed a lot of this. You have a civil prosecutor now. They've taken all the civil work away from the district attorney.

When I was there the district attorney had a civil department, and a criminal department. A lot of counties still do.

King: I see. And the district attorney was against it because he wanted to have both civil and criminal departments operate out of his office.

Jahnsen: Well, he wanted them together. Now the civil department advises the board of supervisors and handles the school departments. They are now entirely separate. In other words, they had a criminal and civil and investigative department under the district attorney when I was in the office.

King: I see. Were the deputy attorneys assigned to particular areas or cases?

Jahnsen: Yes, some deputies to handle criminal and others the civil cases. But the DA's investigators would have to go out and get the evidence in both civil and criminal cases.

King: I have one more question to ask you about the DA's office. When does the district attorney himself take a case and appear in court? Did he have some policy about giving deputies a chance?

Jahnsen: Well, Mr. Warren did have a policy. It used to be said about certain prosecutors that they let their deputies always carry the heavy work. Either because they didn't have the ability, or they didn't have the courage, or for political reasons, they didn't want to be involved. They could blame it on somebody else, or something along that line for one reason or another. But every major case in Alameda county Earl Warren associated himself in the trial.

Updating the Record System

Jahnsen: The district attorney's office has what is known as a "short story"--

King: Yes. We know about those.

Jahnsen: I think I mentioned it to you before. They are not public records; they're the district attorney's records, but certainly there should be a way of getting these short stories. Now there's several copies of them. The short stories are prepared in quadruplicate or more copies. The district attorney

Jahnsen: has the original right in his private office. A copy is left with the chief criminal deputy. Another one is left in the prosecuting attorney's office where the case is handled.

It is very important to have short stories in order to be familiar with the case when people come in and talk over the facts with the deputy who is to handle the case. He can quickly refer to the facts, take the name of the witness or person calling, and be familiar with the case and discuss with them about a case. These copies have been filed for many years. They're in the district attorney's office.

King: In the basement.

Jahnsen: In the basement of the courthouse. I don't think they have been destroyed.

Albert Hederman, who came into the office as an office boy clerk, is now chief assistant under the district attorney, Lowell Jensen. He is thoroughly familiar with this procedure.

Clarence Severin is another one who knows all about how these are filed. Clarence knows all about the short story system and where they are filed.

King: Now is that an innovation that Warren made in the office, the short story?

Jahnsen: I think it was a carry-over from some of the previous district attorneys.

King: You'd have to have a system like that?

Jahnsen: Yes. I think so, but usually they weren't very brief.

We had the Gilstrap case--

King: That's the oil--

Jahnsen: Yes. The oil fraud.

King: Downstate someplace.

Jahnsen: Yes. I remember this case. I wrote twenty-six pages of notes on a conversation between Chief Robert Tracy of the Oakland Police Department and Gilstrap. He sued Mr. Warren and others

Jahnsen: in the federal courts for millions and millions of dollars. The twenty-six pages of notes I had written I turned over to Jim Oakley, assistant district attorney, who is now a retired judge. Jim's another man who could give you a lot of information.

King: Yes. We're going to talk to him.

Jahnsen: These twenty-six pages of notes had much to do with breaking the back of Gilstrap's suit.

This is something that you ought to have. These [the short stories] could be microfilmed. I would think you should have those, particularly during the Warren administration.

King: Well, we'll try to make some effort to get ahold of them.*

*Subsequent inquiry at the Alameda County district attorney's office, however, indicated that the short stories from the Warren administration had been destroyed. [Ed. note.]

THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S DEPARTMENT OF INSPECTORS

Detectives in Decoto's Office

King: I'd like to know how the investigative department got started. Decoto didn't have an investigative department, did he? That's one of Warren's innovations.

Jahnsen: Yes, he did, in a sense. Under Decoto he had what was known as a county detective. George Helms was the county detective. They were not peace officers. They received their peace officer authority from the sheriff. They became deputy sheriffs. Their official position for the district attorney was known as county detective.

Their jobs and duties were limited in number and scope. They had to pick up the evidence from the police court clerk's office, such as narcotics, jewelry, whatever the evidence might consist of. They would safely store the same for the trial in the superior courts in the district attorney's office. They would conduct further investigations when required.

Mr. Warren Enlarges the Investigative Staff

Jahnsen: When Mr. Warren became district attorney in 1925 he decided to increase his first budget so he could make provisions for the investigative staff. He had two members added to this county detective force. One was Chester Flint and the other as myself. I was appointed on the 24th day of July, 1925, and Flint come in on the 25th or 26th, approximately the same time.

Jahnsen: Chester Flint was an Oakland police officer and very reliable, a very fine person of unquestionable character. It would be well to interview him, too. He's up in Trinity County. He can add a lot to this history.

King: You and he worked together?

Jahnsen: Yes, at that time with George Helms, who was the only county detective, until Mr. Warren got three more people appointed by the board of supervisors.

Our jobs were limited because of our need for peace officer status. We were working under the sheriff. Frank Barnet was sheriff, and he appointed us deputy sheriffs without salary. We received our salary through the district attorney, the budget being increased by the board of supervisors, in order to employ us.

The Inspector's Job

Jahnsen: The duties were numerous. Many law enforcement problems were thrown in the lap of the district attorney. Mr. Warren wanted to do something about these matters. Complaints were coming in about bootleggers, narcotic peddlers, and bail bond frauds, complaints from people who were losing property and numerous other matters. The sheriff didn't have much to do with this because many of them were in the cities. The sheriff operated in the county.

There were ten cities and towns in the county of Alameda, and most of the violations were in these areas. The cities and county didn't have any close knit or real organization, nor close cooperation. You had at that time a constable system in the community in the justice courts. You had the constable and deputy constables that served the process where the sheriff did this for the superior court. A lot of the jurisdiction overlapped. It was up to the district attorney to coordinate their activities.

To try to clarify this thing: the district attorney's investigators were a separate investigative force from the others, the sheriff and his deputies, the constable and his deputies, and the several police departments. The sheriff

Jahnsen: handled everything in the superior court. This is before they had the municipal court system.

Then you had the justice courts. You didn't have to pass the state bar to be a judge; you were appointed by the supervisors. The constables worked under the justice court system. They did the same thing that the sheriff did in the superior court.

Now there was another court system, known as the recorder's court. Emeryville had such a court. The police department serviced these courts. You then had enforcing the laws, the sheriff, the constable, and the police departments.

Say we had a burglary, or robbery, or shooting, or whatever it might be, the department that would be called would be either the police department or the sheriff's office to handle it, or it could be the constable would handle it, depending on the locality. If it was in the county, and it was a serious crime, the constable would probably be the first man there if he'd heard about it. He'd immediately notify the sheriff, so the chief criminal deputy in the sheriff's office would take over the case.

The police department did nothing but police work. If the robbery, or the burglary, or the murder, whatever it might be, was handled by the local authorities, they would accumulate all the evidence possible and they would take it to the prosecuting attorney and through the preliminary hearing.

When we found that some of these cases were not being prepared well enough to secure a conviction in court, that they weren't being fully processed, the district attorney would send one of the county detectives, or later called inspectors, up to the police court to get the evidence and to bring it to the district attorney's office to hold it for trial in the superior courts. He'd sign a receipt for it. He got it from the police court clerk. It was money, narcotics, jewelry, or whatever it was.

Then it would go into the district attorney's safe, so at the trial the evidence would be right at hand. One man was assigned to this job, and would go into court and testify that this was the same evidence presented at the preliminary hearing and it was never out of his hands. The chain of evidence wouldn't be broken; in other words, there was no chance for

Jahnsen: substitution of the evidence. If more investigative work was needed, a county detective or inspector was assigned to the case.

Mr. Warren was very particular that all laws should be enforced, regardless of their popularity. He felt he should see that the officers should enforce the Prohibition laws the same as all laws on the statute books. The sheriff wasn't doing it; the sheriff appeared to be closely associated with many of these people in the liquor business. It'd be embarrassing for him to go out and raid and arrest a bootlegger or some of the former liquor dealers and saloon men.

It was the same thing with other vice. We had a lot of prostitutes, and people never thought much about them running around. As long as they kept themselves healthy, and a lot of disease wasn't being communicated, they didn't worry too much about this. A lot of people thought this was the thing to do. They thought that this saved a lot of women from being raped.

Well, the same way with the liquor laws. They weren't being enforced. A lot of these bootleggers were old-time saloon-keepers. The sheriff in those days used to visit a lot of these places and have a drink. This was before Prohibition became a law. Well, he just didn't quit over night, just because Prohibition became a law to be enforced. They went around the back and went in, or they had a special place they could go, and not be noticed or singled out for not enforcing the law.

So Mr. Warren announced it publicly, "I'm going to enforce the Prohibition laws. They're on the statute books." Bear in mind now, the district attorney is the chief law enforcement officer of the county.

King: That's right.

Jahnsen: He had an obligation to see that the law enforcement agencies did their duty. If not he had to take steps to enforce the law he was sworn to uphold. He had various avenues to do this, by obtaining the evidence, passing it on to the law enforcement agencies, using the evidence to padlock the place through abatement proceedings, and also going out with his county detectives or inspectors and enforcing the law.

Jahnsen:

Now these investigators didn't have any legal authority to make an arrest. They weren't peace officers. They were investigators without peace officer authority or, you might say, police power. Warren then decided that he was going to use some of his people to do this. What he had to do was to then get the legislature to give the district attorneys peace officer power, and not have the sheriff or constable deputize his men.

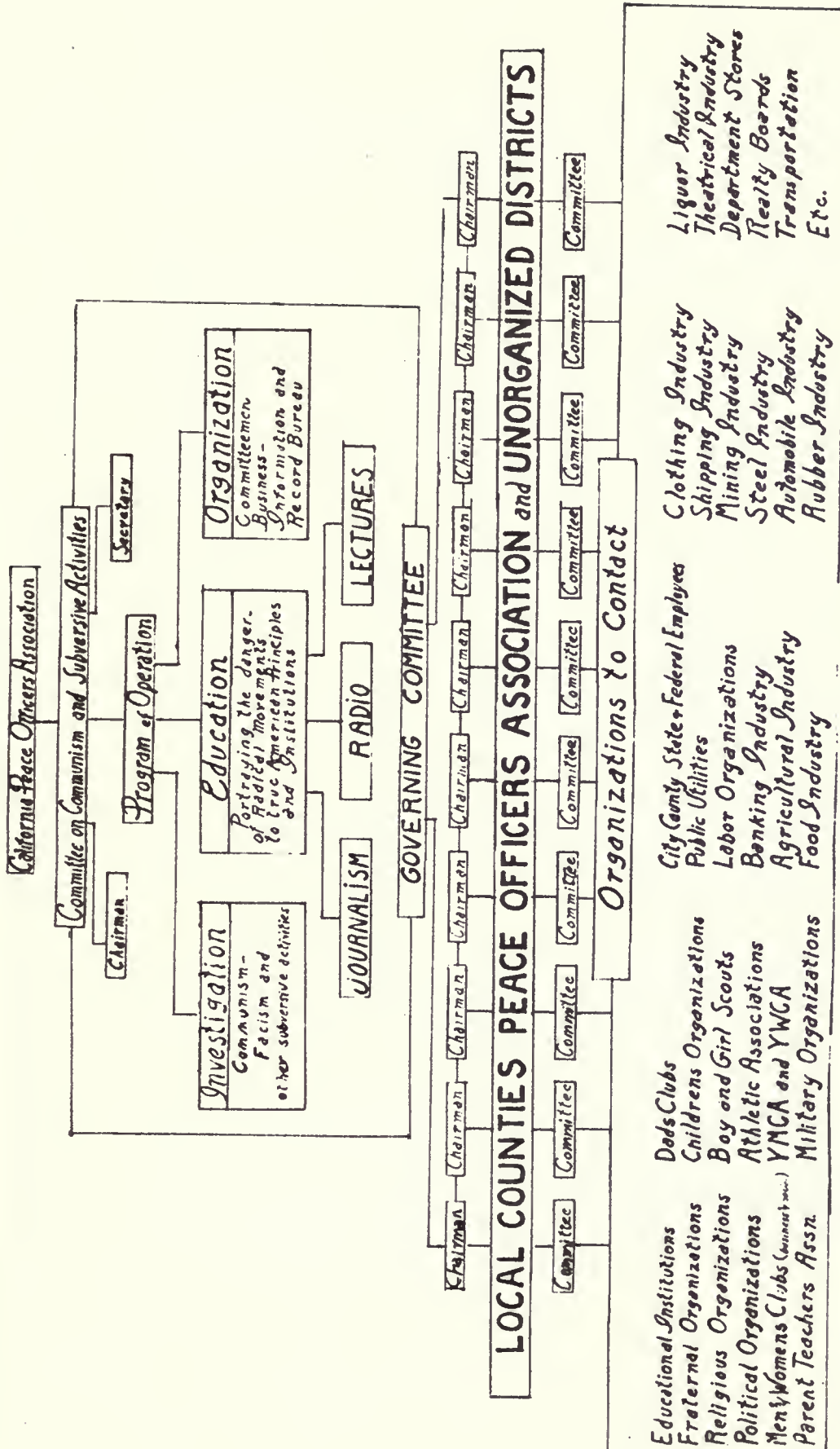
Now there was always the division that a prosecutor could not be a peace officer. The prosecutor could not be the policeman. There was the police department, the prosecution or the district attorney, the courts, the sheriff, and the jail. There were three different divisions in it, and probably more, but the main divisions. The district attorney couldn't be the police department; he must be the prosecutor. Consequently he couldn't have his people out investigating, making arrests, and then prosecuting the people.

But the legislature then created this new set up, giving district attorneys' investigators peace officer power, so they'd become peace officers. So then instead of going out under the sheriff as his deputy, unpaid by him--the sheriff would get credit for the enforcement the district attorney ordered, and he'd get hell, too, because a lot of these people would be calling him because some of his friends would go to jail. You'd have locked them up in the sheriff's jail.

When the investigative force was increased to eight men, we had four men assigned to strictly law enforcement of any law, whatever it might be, without the sheriff or any police department. Mr. Warren sent down a rule. He says, "We will not interfere in a community or a city or an area where law enforcement is being enforced, where they're doing their duty."

So Mr. Warren organized, in the county, the chiefs of police and all county law enforcement people into an association. Later this developed and became the basis of the Bay Counties Peace Officers Association. Mr. Warren wasn't the only one who was for this cooperative and joint law enforcement venture. He was wise enough to invite these other law enforcement people in, and present these different law enforcement problems so that they could all operate together.

The law enforcement mutual aid plan came in later as the result of this cooperation. Then there was the State of California



An organization chart of the California Peace Officers Association's Committee on Communism and Subversive Activities, 1930s.

Jahnsen: Peace Officers Association, which Mr. Warren also headed up with other chiefs of police and sheriffs, and set up. He became the head of their law and legislative section. I'm getting away from this thing, and I'm coming back to it.

King: Yes. Let me just backtrack a minute to ask you one question. When you say that Mr. Warren said he wouldn't go into cities where law was being enforced, I suppose that means August Vollmer in Berkeley?

Jahnsen: Well, not only Berkeley. Let's say, out in Hayward and Livermore, for instance. He didn't mean that there wouldn't be some law violations, and if there was and if the chief was derelict in his duty this would be called to the chief's attention, but Mr. Warren wouldn't go in there if they were doing a job, and he would cooperate with them.

Now his fingers reached into all of these areas, because he had all the prosecuting attorneys. The prosecuting attorneys came under the district attorney, and city prosecutors, like out in Berkeley. The deputy district attorney was the city prosecutor. In Oakland, in the prosecuting attorneys' office, were deputy district attorneys. We had a deputy who traveled to all the towns. He went out to San Leandro, to Hayward, to Livermore, to Pleasanton, Alameda. Mr. Warren finally put an office over there in Alameda; the work load demanded it.

These deputies knew what was going on. The judges and other contacts would tell them, the community people would come in and complain to these deputies. When law enforcement did break down, it meant that the district attorney would have to look into it.

Now another thing, where a fraud lapped over from one city to another, such as Alameda and Berkeley and, we'll say, in San Leandro, these three police departments weren't so coordinated. So the DA would coordinate that activity.

To give an illustration, we had Sampsell and McNabb, yacht bandits that came down from up north. McNabb was a bos'n with the steamship companies (I think it was the Dollar Line at that time which later became the American President Lines) and a sharp sort of a fellow in a way, but criminally inclined. Sampsell's father owned a lot of restaurants in Los Angeles, and Sampsell had been in trouble before. He and McNabb teamed up. They became the yacht bandits.

Jahnsen: Now, they sailed this yacht down from up north to San Francisco. They had a plan on robbing banks, and as a result they robbed a bank in San Francisco, a bank in Berkeley, and a bank in north Oakland on Piedmont Avenue.

Some agency had to coordinate these robberies and the same DA had to prosecute. Then it came time for somebody to do something. At that time I was handling the assignment of robbery detail in the DA's office. I worked with the San Francisco police department on the robbery detail over there. There was Bill McMahon and George McLaughlin and Van Matre.

They had already worked on Sampsell and McNabb, and they made the arrest. Now their yacht was down at the San Francisco yacht harbor. The San Francisco police had these fellows in jail. The chief of police of San Francisco at that time felt rather than them trying the case in San Francisco, they'd have Earl Warren do it. Now they had great faith in Earl Warren, like all police departments did.

These fellows, then, turned all of the evidence over to me of this San Francisco robbery. When I say "evidence," I mean papers, documents, money, everything that was evidence. Their faith was that Mr. Warren could convict them. They could get a conviction in Alameda County a lot easier than they could in San Francisco, because Alameda County had the additional charges against them and a better case.

King: So they turned them over to you in a case like this?

Jahnsen: Now then we had to pick up the Berkeley police department evidence, and the Oakland evidence from the Oakland police department. We had to get all the witnesses lined up, and then we had to get all the information on the boat, and then collect the back history of these fellows, get their criminal records, etc., and coordinate the facts with the assistant district attorney that was handling the case.

King: Now who would that be?

Jahnsen: Well, this would have been Mr. Warren and at that time Charlie Wehr (he's passed on now). It could have been Leonard Meltzer, who is also dead. Well, it depends upon who was handling that detail. The district attorney's short story can give you who assisted Mr. Warren.

Jahnsen: So, when you ask me how would you start an investigation, well, it depends where it originates. If it came through the police department and it was a robbery, burglary or a murder, the police would handle it up to a certain point.

King: And then you'd take over.

Jahnsen: The person or persons would be held to answer to the superior court. In addition to just getting the evidence, and calling in the police and letting them tell us the facts, we would then go out and find all the witnesses. Maybe the police didn't get all the witnesses. Maybe we had to have a witness that saw this thing, or we might have to have a witness for some other purpose. Or maybe it became a question of getting a psychiatrist. Maybe we'd have to take the psychiatrist or the expert witness out there and go over the ground, so he could become familiar and better acquainted with all the facts. Now this we've done, many a time.

The Oakland Paving Scandal and the Capture of Fred Smith

King: Well, let me ask you another kind of question. The San Francisco Examiner really takes credit for breaking the paving scandal, and says that they found Fred Smith in Los Angeles, and that the DA's office had spent thousands of dollars looking for Ernest Norman in Oklahoma, when in fact he was not very far away, anyway. They say that the graft and the corruption in Oakland was "whispered on every street corner," I think that's the expression they use. Apparently a paper that they don't name, but which must be the Oakland Tribune, or the Oakland Post-Enquirer, tried to break into this in 1927 or '28, and they were stopped at every turn, but that by 1930 they are able to break the whole thing wide open. Now what does that mean?

Jahnsen: This is not entirely true, but in a sense partly so. We might say that the publicity they received from their stories helped them to sell papers and the credit that was taken was true to a certain degree, but not true in every sense.

King: Oh, I understand that!

Jahnsen: The press did deserve credit for a lot of this.

Jahnsen:

Now, in the case of the arrest of Fred Smith: Fred Smith was an automobile dealer out in San Leandro. He handled the Willys Overland agency out there. We felt he was tied up with the Ku Klux Klan group. He was tied in very closely and associated with Sheriff Becker and Undersheriff Parker. Parker was former commissioner of streets for the city of Oakland. Fred Smith was the collector of the monies that were paid in graft, both for the sheriff's office and the city of Oakland.

Becker had his own criminal division. He had Jack Collier, A.R. Shurtleff, and Bill Davis. Shurtleff was chief criminal deputy; the others served under him.

It was reported that Shurtleff received an automobile. He got this automobile from Fred Smith. Well, where did they get their money? We were informed that the sheriff and his criminal department received twenty-five cents for every gallon of moonshine that came from the stills that were being operated in the county. They had some way of checking this, so they must have had somebody overseeing and around looking. If you wanted to operate a still or any other illegal operation in the county, you had to go through Fred Smith.

You know, you can't operate openly like they did and still be under cover. Somebody's going to find out about it. Mr. Warren had undercover agents working for him at that time, and one lived in San Leandro. Nobody knew him; even our own investigators, including myself, never knew that Mr. Warren had this man working. Now Warren was a great person for never letting the right hand know what the left hand was doing if he wanted to check on his own office and his investigators.

This is typical of the federal government with their special agents' offices in the internal revenue departments. Their job was to keep an eye on other departments to keep corruption out of the Internal Revenue Service and other departments in the government.

The same way, this fellow was working on a secret assignment on confidential payroll. I think that time it was \$14,000 that the district attorney had from the board of supervisors for confidential work that the district attorney may have to have to get additional evidence in all types of cases. Maybe it was more; I believe it went up to \$25,000.

Jahnsen: Anyway, he had this fellow working--his name just slips me right now--but he knew Fred Smith. He worked around with Fred Smith. This fellow was getting all the information he could from Smith. He knew about everything Smith knew that was going. He knew where the stills were. Smith had told him this information.

 The agent was a San Leandro man. He and his wife were very well known there. He had another job on the side. Of course he blew the horn and waved the flag for Becker and that group, but he was working for Mr. Warren and the DA's office.

 Now this fellow would come in with all the information. He came in and told us that Fred Smith flew the coop when the indictments came out, and that he knew where Fred Smith was. He knew he was down in Southern California. He'd heard that he was working for Mayor Porter. Mayor Porter was the mayor of Los Angeles at that time. Smith was closely associated with him. If we came down there, he could put the finger on him, because he knew Fred Smith, and he felt Fred Smith would be willing to see him.

 Well, Fred Smith in the meantime, unbeknownst to anybody, changed his name to Perkins, so that it was Fred Perkins. Nobody knew him as Fred Smith down there. We heard that he was pretty well up in Porter's administration, pretty close to the mayor. Whether the mayor knew about his previous background or not, I don't know. But anyway, his wife was some way related to the Porter family or there was some relationship between Fred Smith and the Porter administration. This didn't fully develop until later.

 Mr. Warren and George Helms got on the train one night. Left me with a Cadillac automobile to meet them the next morning in Los Angeles. I left at five o'clock to drive to Los Angeles, alone. They went on the Southern Pacific Lark. I got down there and met them at the train in the morning. I knew that they were going to see somebody. They had had an appointment with this undercover fellow.

 There was another man in San Leandro by the name of Bill Mathews, and they owned a poolroom out there. Mathews was friendly to George Helms. Mathews would supply Helms with a lot of information as to what was going on between Smith and

Jahnsen: the sheriff's office. He knew Fred Smith. In fact, their businesses were pretty close, almost next door to each other. They ran a poolroom there, and Smith the automobile agency.

Mr. Warren talked to this undercover agent that morning, and he gave Mr. Warren certain information. We were to go to certain places and to do certain things while Mr. Warren and Mr. Helms were in Los Angeles.

Mr. Warren and Mr. Helms were doing all of the running around and seeing people confidentially. My job was to drive them around and they collected all the information they could on Smith and his associates.

It came time when Mr. Warren thought he couldn't stay down in Los Angeles any longer. They had to go back. After briefing me they sent Harry Piper, one of our inspectors, down. He and I worked together.

We worked with a Los Angeles policeman named Ollie Shan, whom Piper knew from some previous experience in World War I. We were down there for nearly a month. I have all the notes on that.

Mr. Warren and Mr. Helms decided to uncover this fellow to Piper and me. This fellow was living out in Monterey Park. There was a dentist there, and he was related to Smith, Smith's uncle. Smith was supposed to be living out there with this relative under cover. So we hung around Monterey Park day after day after day, night after night after night, to try and pick up Smith. No Smith showed up.

King: Now, did you have to serve him with a warrant.

Jahnsen: We didn't have any papers. He was indicted, but we didn't have any warrant, and on the fact of the indictment we could arrest him on it in those days.

King: You could just arrest him and bring him back.

Jahnsen: Sure. We could arrest him and then phone for instructions as to whatever we were to do with him at this time. The main thing was to arrest and to hold him. But we were unsuccessful after spending many days and nights down there.

King: Pretty slippery fish, he sounds like.

Jahnsen: Well, he had a lot of connections. This was it. And we were told. It was just, "Well, there's a pond here and a pond there," and you don't know which one the fish is in. You know he's around there someplace. It's not easy to track down a fellow like this down there. We didn't dare to contact the police department too much for what we were doing, because of Mayor Porter. This Smith was tied into the mayor, so we didn't know how far up in the police department this fellow was going to get information or protection.

We practically gave it up, for the time being. One day there's fellow by the name of Bill Mason--

King: He was city editor for the Examiner's Oakland and East Bay office?

Jahnsen: He used to be with the Call-Bulletin under Walter Crowley. I suppose you'd say he was a crusading type of a newspaper man. He later transferred. The Bulletin then became the Call-Bulletin under Hearst, and then he went over in the Oakland bureau of the Examiner. He got into a lot of these things, and you'll probably see a lot of newspaper articles with his name in it.

Anyway, he had a fellow that had some information about where he could get Fred Smith. This is where the Examiner comes in. Bill Mason knew somebody who could do this, down in Los Angeles. This fella's name slips me at the time. There was two of them, it developed.

I said, "Well hell, what's the use?" Bill Mason told me what information he had, and I said, "Well, we've been all through that. Why should we go back and go all the way down there and again spend weeks and not get anything. We're gonna just go over this same ground again, Monterey Park, and Dr. So-and-So's place, and why should we do all this? This is just foolish."

They said no, so Mr. Warren said, "Well, go anyway, and satisfy the Examiner. Satisfy the press. If you don't go, they're going to say, you know, that maybe you're in with them, or that you don't want to go for some good reason." This was about the feeling. So you must take the ride whether you wanted to go or you didn't want to go.

Jahnsen: We had a fellow from the Examiner with us. He contacted a representative of the L.A. Examiner after our arrival. His name was Rocklin. The L.A. Examiner man, Rocklin, said, "Well, there's a fellow down here, they call him Red. We'll get ahold of him and see what he knows." Now we had several different pictures of Fred Smith that we were able to pick up. The L.A. Examiner man, Rocklin, Mr. Charles Blagborne and I went over to the corner of First and Temple, to a building where the Examiner had an office.

Mr. Rocklin told us that we could meet Red there, so we went over and we met him. This is where the name Perkins comes in. We show him these pictures. "Oh," he said, "Sure, I know that guy." Red was a fellow that peddles newspapers on the corner.

Red said, "That's Fred Perkins." I said, "You know this fellow?" "Yeah." "This is Fred Smith." "Naw, his name is Poikins"--that's the way he talked--"He's very close to the mayor. I know him. I know where he lives."

I says, "You do?" "Yeah." This is about ten o'clock in the morning. "You're sure it's the same fellow?" He says, "Yeah. But he's a bad guy. He's in with the gangsters. They carry machine guns."

Now, I felt that this fellow was romancing. And I was sure of that. I never saw this man in my life before. I asked, "How do you know they carry machine guns?" "I saw de guns, his house is loaded wit' guns. Dey've got de Chicago rackets, dat's what dey are!" And so on, speaking in this lingo that he used. I was becoming very skeptical and doubtful, so I said, "Oh, no, can't be. This fellow wouldn't harm anyone physically. That can't be Fred Smith!" He insisted, "I know it's him. I can prove it."

Now this fellow Red had just been arrested and was coming up in court for trial, and he made a deal with Mr. Rocklin, the Los Angeles Examiner man--"if you can get my case dismissed or get me out of this jam, I'll point the fellow out to you." "But," he said, "I don't want to go in court." This judge that he, Red, was going before in court was going to sentence him to the county jail for six months for some reason or other. This Red had violated his parole or his probation or whatever it was, I don't know. Well, it's no question he was going to go to jail.

Jahnsen: Rocklin said, "I'll go and see the judge and see if I can help you and try to get you off."

Now how he could tell this fellow that, I don't know. But I'm satisfied the nature of the crime wasn't anything too great, but Red was very concerned and wanted help. He had been arrested and convicted. Then he was on probation, as I remember it, and the judge was going to revoke his probation.

King: This is the sheet hustler we're talking about.

Jahnsen: Yes. So we went up there, and we had Red with us. Rocklin went in and saw the judge, and he asked that the case be put over and told the judge this important story. What he told him in words, I don't know, but he notified him that it was important enough not to sentence this fellow at that time, and if the fellow produced all he said he could, Rocklin would so advise the court. There'd be no argument about it, if Red would go and put the finger on Smith, or Perkins, as he knew him. The court would take this fact in consideration in making its judgment.

At this time, Charlie Blagbourne was with me. Blagbourne was one of our inspectors. We drove down with this other fellow from the San Francisco Examiner. This fellow was a hot news writer and he was the one that was putting the heat on us to make the trip.

Well, we didn't have this connection with the Examiner before, in Los Angeles. But I can say they had a lot to do with this. If it hadn't been for them we would not have picked up Smith as soon as we did. It is possible that we would have gotten Fred Smith later in some other way, but it doesn't mean we never would have picked him up. It was very important to arrest him at the time we did, as the investigation of the sheriff's office was going on at that time, and Smith was a very important link in the graft trials.

King: They certainly toot their own horn about it! [Laughter]

Jahnsen: Yes. So what happens: it was out in Beverly Hills, the house that Perkins is living in. We drove out there as Red directed, and he says, "Dat's de house he's livin' in." Now Rocklin couldn't go with us. He had a deadline or something to meet. But this other fellow did go with us.

Jahnsen: Inspector Charlie Blagbourne was driving, and I was in the front seat, and Red was in the back with the San Francisco Examiner man. Just about the psychological time that we were going to go by the house, a car was coming out, and people were going to get in this car, and there was Fred Smith! Just happened to hit it right!

We just pulled up to the curb, just beyond the house. I said, "Red, go back and talk to him; go back and talk to him." He said, "Dey'll shoot ya. Dey got their guns!" Actually what was happening was, Fred Smith and his wife and a couple of friends and a couple of real estate operators were going to go out and look at a piece of property, we found out later. But Red put the finger on them as being all gangsters. Well, you can't tell a gangster when he's dressed up like a millionaire! They don't look like gangsters. They look like important business people.

As they came out I said to Charlie Blagbourne, "What are we going to do?" Charlie says, "Well Jesus--" I said, "Geez, we're gonna have to take 'im; we can't lose 'im. We're gonna have to take 'im, Charlie! Now, you back up." This newspaper man dropped on the floor of the car, the Examiner man, and laid down on the floor of the car! I think his name was something like Brewster. He was scared to death! He believed Red's description of these people.

King: Those machine guns. [Laughter]

Jahnsen: So Blagbourne backed up and Red went over and talked to Fred Smith. The car started backing out of the driveway, Fred started to walk out, and Red got up tight enough to talk to him. The minute he did, I jumped out of the car, and I stuck up Smith with my gun, and ordered the others not to make any false moves. I cautioned Smith not to either and told Smith "If you move, I'll kill you! And if anybody in your group starts anything, you're gonna be dead. If there's anybody in this crowd's gonna kill me, you're gonna die with me!"

Blagbourne slid around to the back and stuck the rest of the fellows up. I said, "Up with your hands you guys!" So they went up, and Blagbourne ordered them not to move. The two of us with drawn revolvers arrested Fred Smith. Red was there, so Red didn't want to get in the car. He was afraid and didn't want it to appear that he had anything to do with pointing out Smith.

Jahnsen: I grabbed Smith, ran him over to the car, and I got him in the back of the car. I dropped my handcuffs to the Examiner man, who was hiding on the floor of the car, and I says, "Handcuff 'im." He wouldn't get up off the floor! [Laughter] I said, "Charlie, get in the car."

Meantime, Red had walked down the block; he got away from there. Now nobody knew Red had uncovered them. They didn't see him get out of the car.

So I then got Fred Smith in the car, and had the newspaper man give me the handcuffs, and I handcuffed Smith. Now we didn't go back the same way, because we knew maybe we'd be shadowed. We knew the alarm was going to go out. And Mrs. Smith appeared to be fainting. Edna was her name.

So by God, down the street we went, losing no time to leave the neighborhood. We made a couple of turns, doubled back around the other way, back across the street, and if we were being followed, they'd be going the way we left the Smith residence. We came back and doubled back down the street and went back right downtown to a telephone and phoned the Examiner and told Rocklin we had the fellow. We picked up Red in the meantime.

Rocklin had to go right down to the court; we had to get rid of Red. So we went down and met Rocklin and he took Red up to see the judge, and told the judge what Red had done as he agreed to do. Red was to appear in court at a later date for final disposition of his case.

King: Wonderful.

Jahnsen: We then drove over to east Los Angeles, and then we drove over toward Pasadena, so as to completely throw anyone off our trail. So nobody could find us, we used covered license plates. I phoned Oakland and informed George Helms of the arrest, and that we had him in custody and we were going to proceed north.

We did this so that we wouldn't be overtaken. The roads could be blocked off, because of Smith's connections. We felt someone could be looking for us, and it was a sort of kidnapping, as you might say, although he was under arrest and we had a warrant for him. We would normally have put him in

Jahnsen: the Los Angeles county jail, but he would have been out on bail in a short time and we would have lost everything.

King: Yes. Because he had connections.

Jahnsen: So then we immediately drove across through the mountains towards Santa Barbara. I had phoned in the meantime and we agreed to meet Mr. Warren and Mr. Helms at San Jose. They were going to come down to the old Metropole Hotel, or whatever the name of the hotel was, and then we met there.

In the meantime, on the way up, I had a long talk with Smith and informed him to a degree that he knew we had sufficient evidence to send him to prison, that the sheriff's office, Sheriff Becker and the others, had their plans laid to blame everything on Smith. They had been in touch with him while he was in hiding and would let him know of all the moves that were being made to catch him. When they heard he was in custody, they would then plan to desert him and let him hold the bag. I informed him that the wise thing for him to do was not to fool around, that he should look out for Fred Smith first and tell the truth, that I could not promise him anything, but if he wanted to come clean, and tell the whole truth, he could be on the side of the law, or he could be over in the penitentiary with the rest of them, had he decided to do otherwise.

Smith said, "I don't want to get involved. I'll do everything." So Fred Smith more or less did this. We did not book him in jail, but kept him in custody in a private cottage on the Russian River, under guard of district attorney's inspectors. He could then be interviewed by assistant district attorneys without anyone interfering. This way he had time to be with his wife and to relax and talk freely. Fred Smith stayed up there with his wife and was protected from anyone wanting to do him injury. No one but a few persons knew his whereabouts.

STANDARDS IN THE TREATMENT OF SUSPECTS

- King: Let me ask you one thing. When you brought a man like Smith in like that, did Warren have standards of the way you were supposed to behave in terms of confessions, or how you were supposed to treat him in the car? I remember reading newspapers in the '30s which reported that a policeman grilled a subject for forty-eight hours, and nobody thought that was wrong or bad or anything like that.
- Jahnsen: Yes, he did. He was very strict on the taking of confessions. They had to be free and voluntary. Not free and voluntary from so many lashes or so many bats on the head, or a kick in the chest or something like that. No abuse at all. No abuse at all.
- King: This was very unusual at that time, wasn't it?
- Jahnsen: Well, no it wasn't, but I think it was a question of applied psychology more than anything else. I think I told you about the statement of the arrest or the interview of Regan in the killing of Mr. Warren's father?
- King: No.
- Jahnsen: I didn't tell you that, huh? Well, you'll probably want to cover that whole thing anyway in a separate issue.
- King: Yes.

Two Fraud Cases

Jahnsen: Well, to give you an illustration of what I'm referring to regarding taking statements or confessions, we had a fraud case that involved the state department of education. It involved a school board down in San Luis Obispo, and it involved state and county people.

King: This must be later when you were in the attorney general's office?

Jahnsen: Yes, it was in the attorney general's office.

The incident where it occurred was, some woman had come into the district attorney's office in Oakland and was referred to Inspector Chester Flint. This woman owned a boarding house out in north Oakland. At that time she was suspicious of a young man who had resided there over a period of time, and would stay a day or two and then go away. But usually during the period of time he was there, she would find envelopes addressed to different people under different names, under different post office boxes, torn up in little bits. When she cleaned the room up after he left she found these, and she became curious. She was suspicious of his actions. It's odd for a young man to come into a rooming house for just a couple of days, you see, and then come back after a certain period of time, say every thirty days.

So she came to the district attorney's office and talked to Flint. Flint sent her up to the Oakland police department to talk to some of the police inspectors with regard to her suspicions and findings. They were not interested in her story. She later returned and Inspector Flint sent her to see the attorney general and his investigative staff. We made an investigation to determine who this young man was and what he was up to. She thought that this boy was peddling dope, or fooling with narcotics, or something. She didn't think it was legitimate.

When she told her story--but she just didn't know the ways of the underworld--she was a very fine woman, and her imagination could run away with her.

Inspector Flint listened to the story. He called me on the phone. He said, "I think I have a statewide fraud or something here in this thing. I don't know, but this woman

Jahnsen: has got a peculiar story she's telling me, and I think it would bear your time to look into it. It's beyond us." Again, it was a police matter, and even though they had jurisdiction, in a sense it would be beyond their normal work. It would be for some state agency to take over.

He gave me all the information he had and we went and talked to the woman, and she told me what had happened. We advised her, "Well, when he comes again, if he does again, save all the papers." She had saved some and we said, "Well, okay, you let us know, and we'll trail the fellow. We'll shadow him." So she did.

We shadowed this fellow. He would go around to a post office box and get an envelope out, he would go to another post office box and get an envelope, he'd go to some other place and pick up an envelope, and he'd get all these things. He'd sit in there and keep the envelopes, but he was taking something out of them. It appeared to be that he was taking out checks. But the fellow who was shadowing him--we had a very good shadow man--he couldn't tell exactly what this fellow was doing.

Prior to this I had investigated a fraud involving the rebate for gasoline tax for other than highway purposes, and we investigated it and caught the fellows. This seemed to be a similar type of offense. The Butz boys were their names.

What they were doing was, they would go up and down the state, all over. They had a little stamp pad set with all the little letters in it, that you used to take out with a little pair of forceps and put in it and make a stamp. They had little sales slips or tabs, and they would use the little print set on the slips to print up, like "Lakeside Oil Company," or "Eureka Fish Company," or whatever it might be. They'd get the name of the gas station or market, etc., but it would be a fictitious name; it wouldn't be exactly the same. They would say "so many gallons of fuel for boats or for farm tractors for off-highway purposes." Then they would file for the remission of tax, so the tax would come back.

They would go down the state on one highway and return up the other highway and they'd send it out for the refund. They had to fill out a form. The State Bureau of Criminal Identification

Jahnsen: and Investigation had been working for over a year trying to catch these fellows.

All these fellows would do was to pick up the checks on the way down and send in more bills for payment as they went along. They would stay at different rooming houses, and then they would say to the clerk or operator, "If any mail comes for me, hold it. I'll be back in a few weeks." Then they would go to post office boxes, too, and pick up this mail, and they had rented a number of post office boxes and would pick up the checks from them. They would fill out a very simple form, and all one had to do was attach the receipts.

Of course the volume in this field was so great nobody ever stopped to look at them, and it just had to be by fluke that they found it and thought there was something wrong with it, and gave it to the state bureau to investigate. Owen Kessel, a state bureau investigator, come in one evening about quarter to five. He said, "I'm not getting very far with this case and need help." (I am not getting away from this other story, but I'll come back to it.)

So he came around, and he said, "I've got something here. I'd like to work with you fellows on it. I think it's a fraud case--I don't know." He started to tell me the story, and I said to the other inspectors, "Well fellows, don't go home; we got a job." I wouldn't let anybody go. He said, "Well, let's do it tomorrow." And I said, "No. Why wait til tomorrow?" Because he told me about hotels that he thought these checks were in. I said, "In the meantime, the fellow may come to these hotels. Let's just go and see if they're there. We'll take you out to dinner." So he said, "Okay."

We went over to Eighth and Webster Streets; there's a corner hotel there. We walked up the stairs, and when we got up to the stairs, this day clerk was rooming this man. We looked up in the box--these little pidgeon-hole boxes--and we could see an envelope in there was identical with this one which was coming from the controller's office. The state controller was paying this money, refund.

So, just about this time--we didn't even have a chance to ask the clerk about this--a fellow come up the stairs, and he says, "Hi! Is there any mail for me?" The desk clerk said, "Yeah, here's the letter for you." He took the envelope we were

Jahnsen: looking at. The fellow started down the stairs. I said to Investigator Kessel with me, "Let's go."

I said, "Say, fella, I'd like to ask a question." He looked, and he says, "This isn't my envelope," and he was going to take it back. I said, "Oh, yes it is. It's your envelope all right. And you're our man!"

I took him into custody and held him for investigation, but his brother was sitting across the street in a car. The minute we went down, we saw the fellow across in the car. We got him just before he got to the door. Our car was there, and he, the arrested man, waved to his brother to give him a sign, and we stopped him and arrested him. When we searched them, here they had many of these checks. So we locked them up in the county jail.

One brother wouldn't talk at all. We took the other brother out to the place in Berkeley, on the pretext now--again, psychological, in order to get the facts and the evidence. He wanted to phone his wife. I said, "Don't worry about that, where do you live?" He said, "I live out in Berkeley." "Oh, well hell, we probably aren't going to hold you very long anyway. If you want to go and tell your wife, we have to go to Berkeley, so we'll take you out and let you say what you want to her." We wanted to find out where he lived.

We went out there, and he went and talked to his wife, and he told her something. In the meantime--it was his home, and he was a criminal under arrest, and he took us in. We searched his home and got all the stamp pads and everything else, got all the evidence, you see?

Well, this was one of the cases that when this other boy was being shadowed that I mentioned, I figured it was the same kind of a deal. Now, it involved a fellow who was a professor in a high school in Oroville. It involved some people in the department of education and in the controller's office who handled the rebates, as I remember.

King: So it was another very similar type of fraud?

Jahnsen: Yes. A similar type. What had happened was that these fellows had got together and figured out a way how they could defraud the state out of unemployment insurance. Then, if anything went

Jahnsen: wrong, any investigation, they knew that they would hear about it, because it was their job to set up a program so that you couldn't defraud the unemployment insurance.

They set up one, and they had this here superintendent of schools in San Luis Obispo, they had this boy who was doing the collecting who was related to him, they had this professor in this school--I think it was Oroville--and they had these two people in the state unemployment insurance group.

What they did was, they filed with the state a company certificate showing all the employees listed under a phony company. They set up these phony companies, and then they would file a list of employees--like the ABC Coal Company I think was one of them, and several other companies. Then they would pay into the fund the amount of money that was due for taxes, unemployment income tax. I think it was employment insurance tax--

King: The employer's contribution.

Jahnsen: Their contribution--they would file this amount of money with the state. They did this two or three months. They had to have a little capital to start.

Then, all of a sudden, the company would go broke. All these phony employees, then, when they went broke, would file for unemployment insurance. Then the money would come in checks, and they had all these lists, and everyone--if there was twenty on the list, there'd be twenty employees filing--it ran into many thousands of dollars--and they would continue filing for this insurance money. This money would then go to these various post office boxes and this young man was going around picking up all these envelopes, and all these checks would go into their pockets.

Now, in getting back to the original thought: how did you get the confessions and how did Earl Warren stand for it? Well, in this case, after the arrests were made, with the cooperation of the district attorney of San Luis Obispo County--and we trailed these fellows, too, a long way. At a certain prescribed hour we wanted to arrest all these people at one time. We had a number of places in the state that we had to make the arrests. We had to get this young fellow--trail him--so we wouldn't lose him.

Jahnsen: This superintendent of instruction down there in San Luis Obispo, he was also grafting on getting supplies to the schools.

King: I see. He was a busy man.

Jahnsen: Putting in supplies, and he was cutting back on this thing.

When the arrests were made, we took them all in, picked them all up and drove them into Alameda County, booked them and interrogated them. We had deputies all lined up, set it up so that each one would interview these fellows, and they were briefed on the case in advance. This one boy wouldn't talk. He wouldn't talk. You couldn't do anything with him.

King: Were there any rules about how long you could interview them, or anything like that? I mean, could you keep on--

Jahnsen: A reasonable length of time.

So anyway, in this case Mr. Warren wanted to talk to this boy, so I sat in there with him, and he wouldn't say yes or no or anything. He just wouldn't talk to anybody. This is in the attorney general's office. We finally brought him back into my office and sat down.

One of these fellows was his uncle, his mother's brother. We got talking about families, and again applying psychology on him--families and one thing and another. I said to him, "Gee, aren't you going to be ashamed and feel pretty bad--won't your mother be all broken up about this thing?" Really got down underneath the kid a little bit with a little warm talk and affection, and so forth, and, "Gee it's a shame--your life, going ahead, and you're just a youngster here--" and one thing and another, so gradually I got the kid around to where he'd talk.

Then we took him out to dinner, and after talking with him a little longer, I said, "Now, Mr. Warren's a very nice man, he has a family, and I would think that-- After all, you don't want to go to the penitentiary or anything else. What's it going to do to your family and your future life," and went on with him, and finally he agreed to tell us the story. He told us what his job was, to go out and pick all this money up. One of these fellows later committed suicide, the fellow up in Oroville or wherever it was.

Jahnsen: A similar thing happened in the ship murder case, and I can cover that when we come to it. This was no force, it was just ordinary reasoning--letting the truth bear upon the mind of the individual. Give them a light so they could see; so they could understand. Taking away the fear from them, you see?

The Shipboard Murder Case

King: Yes. Let's talk about the ship murder case a couple of minutes.

Jahnsen: To go back on the killing of George W. Alberts. The ship was laying at Encinal Terminal in Alameda, and we got a call from the police department. We had Lloyd Jester, and George Hard, I guess it was--maybe Flint and George Hard--anyway they were working on the homicide detail at the time, with Charlie Wehr, assistant district attorney. We had no notice of this, except the police department said, "The chief engineer of the ship had been murdered!"

King: Yes. Now you had a big part to play in this case, didn't you? You were the man that got all the information, weren't you?

Jahnsen: Yes. I got all the confessions. Yes.

So anyway, in this deal as I remember it now, we were working on the board of equalization graft scandal--I think it was 1934-35. We had the grand jury going--may be confused a little bit as to the time--and we had a lot of things to do, and I hadn't paid too much attention to this murder case because it was a police matter.

The ship was there, and this man had been murdered in his room, and they had no suspects. What they did was to block off anybody leaving the ship. The fellow who found the chief engineer, Alberts, was a fellow named Roscoe E. Slade from Mobile, Alabama, and he was the first assistant engineer. A rather sloven type of an individual, peculiar in a way. He was a nice fella, but he didn't have much oomph, and he was just day by day going along, you know, and he wasn't any flash plate or anything else.

Jahnsen: Anyway, in this case Slade and the chief engineer had had a bad argument. Alberts was an anti-union man. He was a company man, as they call it. Slade and he weren't seeing eye to eye over some situation that I don't think was really fully developed, because Alberts died. Slade said they'd had an argument, and the ship was getting ready to sail, about four o'clock. Slade was going to quit, but if he quit the ship they wouldn't have had a first assistant engineer. So they went up and talked to the captain, Pete Odeen, who incidentally lives right over here in Bennet Valley. I see him every once in a while. He was with a different company later, with the Alcoa Steamship company.*

But anyway, the chief assistant, Slade, went up to see the captain, told him he was going to quit, and the captain said to him, "Well why do that now? Why don't you go up north with us--why tie the ship up."

Captain Pete Odeen's a nice fellow, an easy-going Swedish fellow. He said, "Why don't you just--what the heck--go along, and then if you come back, and you don't get along, you can quit then, but you won't tie the ship up, because it runs into a lot of money, tying the ship up." "Well," Slade said, "All right."

Shortly thereafterwards they found Alberts in his room, stabbed. The femoral artery in his leg was cut in here. He was stabbed a couple of times, and he bled to death there. Somebody came in there, I forget whether it was Slade or not, to talk to him about something, and they found him dying on the floor.

Well, immediately it looked as though Slade had done the job, see? Of course it would be obvious, on, you might say, reflection, to see that this would be a foolish thing after the argument for him to do this. Alberts was a big man--he could throw Slade right overboard--he was a tremendous big fellow. Lived in San Jose.

*See Peter Odeen, "Captain of the Point Lobos," in The Shipboard Murder Case: Labor, Radicalism, and Earl Warren, 1936-1941, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1976.

Jahnsen: Before I was assigned to the case Mr. Warren said to me, "What the hell are you doing? Aren't you over there on that case?" I said, "What case?" Well, he says, "Hell, you know they killed a chief engineer over there. My God, this is terrible! Get over there! Get somebody over there!" I said, "Okay."

We got right over, and Wehr and the rest of them went over and started taking statements of everybody on the ship. Well, hell, I had the grand jury, I had other investigators, and as I said Helms wasn't too much help on these things. He was a wonderful man, but he was always available to get his picture taken! What I mean was, he wasn't engineering the thing. We got over there right away, and of course the ship was tied up. They took Alberts' body off. Then we begin to try to find out who the hell killed this guy.

It only comes through contacts. The Marine Firemen's Union--they call it MFOW*--was headed by a fellow named [Earl] King, and King was one of the prime figures in this case. He had an assistant secretary by the name of Murphy, Albert M. Murphy.

Murphy was a very fine fellow. He was a former University of Washington football star, and had broken his leg playing football. He'd gone to sea, and he became a dedicated labor man. King was a Communist.

There was a fellow named [Ernest] Ramsay, Red Ramsay, who was secretary of the Fish Reduction Union, but he'd been the patrolman for the Marine Firemen prior to this, and he had a business down on Fisherman's Wharf. A patrolman is the man who goes around and visits the ships and checks on union people. He was patrolman for the Marine Firemen's Union. At this time [Harry] Bridges and King and all these people were organizing a pretty closed corporation.

King: Was the Marine Firemen's Union a Communist-dominated union?

Jahnsen: Well it was, at this time.

*The full name of the union was Marine Firemen, Oilers, Watertenders, and Wipers Association.

King: When King was head?

Jahnsen: Not, I would say, controlled. Dominated to a great extent, because of the heads of it.

Then we had a fellow down there who worked in the engine room who was a member of that union named [Frank] Conner. Ramsay had been down to the ship before, and Conner was complaining about Alberts. Conner was complaining about Alberts' condition and treatment. Now this all develops later, so I'm coming 'way ahead of the full picture leading up to it.

Ramsay had gone over to the pier in Oakland, right near to the coal docks there, and had gone down to talk to Alberts. He went down there purposely, and he brought over [Ben] Sakovitz and [George] Wallace--these are the fellows who committed the murder. He [Ramsay] had gone over there purposely to have Conner put the finger on Alberts. But Alberts had left the ship, so they couldn't do it, and then the ship moved from there to Encinal Terminal. While the ship was at Encinal Terminal they came back and put the finger on Alberts and Wallace and Sakovitz killed him.

King: Yes. They were only supposed to beat him up, weren't they?

Jahnsen: Well, the story was--it developed in the trial--that they were sent over there to tamp up on him. "Tamp up" could mean anything. If you tamp on the ground with a tamper, you're forcing the ground down. You could tamp on a guy's grave, too, and keep him buried, you see? But at any rate these guys went over there to "tamp up" on him, and they say he was so big, apparently, that this thing got away from them.

King: I see. Now how did you find all this out?

Jahnsen: I'll tell you. I knew Harry Lundeberg, secretary of the Sailors' Union, through waterfront connections. I had associations with seafaring people, and I knew he was head of the Sailors' Union. I knew other people over there in the Masters, Mates and Pilots Association.

Through checking around, we heard that Murphy, King's assistant, knew all about this thing. This information came from a fellow from the Marine Cooks and Stewards Union, whose name was Matthew Guidera.

Jahnsen: Now we knew some of these things. We had people in Southern California checking on the ships. We sent Inspector Jester down there. Mr. Warren sent Leonard Meltzer back East to interview a fellow who was supposed to know something back there, which never really amounted to anything.

But this fellow, Matthew Guidera, who appeared to be a homosexual type of a fellow--and to prove this would only be mainly by surmise from his actions and so forth, and his talk--Guidera came over. A reward was offered, and he wanted to collect the reward. The steamship owners were putting up a reward--I forget the amount--it was five or ten thousand dollars.

King: I think maybe ten.

Jahnsen: Being associated at that time with certain people who were in the Marine Cooks and Stewards, who were very close to King and these people, and to Murphy, he knew that he could get some information that would assist us, if he would get the reward. Hugh Gallagher, who was then the head of the Matson Company--the steamship owners got together and they put up this money. Now these fellows had flew the coop. They were gone. Sakovitz and Wallace had disappeared, King had disappeared, Ramsay was gone.

King: Sakovitz was never found, was he?

Jahnsen: Oh, yeah.

King: Oh, he was found.

Jahnsen: Yes. But we never were able to get him into custody. He just disappeared again.

Well, anyway, Sakovitz disappeared, and of course we didn't know who it was. We didn't know anything about Wallace at that time either. So we arranged with Guidera that he would team up and associate with Murphy. They both lived in the Terminal Hotel, had rooms together. They roomed together for awhile.

The story is this: that King then turned all this affair over to Murphy. He wanted to wash his hands of it so he could blame Murphy. Now Murphy wasn't a Communist, you see. In those days they called them "Comicals"--he wasn't a Comical.

Jahnsen: He never was associated closely with it. Murphy had nothing to do with it, but King wanted to be free of it, so he never could be accused in this thing. So he turned this over to Murphy.

When any communication or anything come in, he'd tell these fellows (Ramsay, Conner, Sakovitz, and Wallace) to get ahold of Murphy. Murphy had the key to the safe deposit box of the union under his name in the Seaboard National Bank down there. He would go over to get the money from their slush fund that they had, and he would send the money to these fellows to get them on their way.

Apparently what Sakovitz did, he flew the country. Wallace tried to get across the border. He was writing Murphy for money because he couldn't get across the border. He spoke broken English. He was afraid of being captured, so he wrote letters to Murphy, and Murphy kept those letters to show to King, and Guidera knew he had the letters. But Guidera couldn't get the letters because they were in Murphy's room. So I said, 'Well, there's only one thing to do, let's go over to his room.'

King: You could use any means of getting evidence?

Jahnsen: Evidence was legal, no matter how you got it. Providing you got it! If you didn't get it, you could be arrested for burglary or some other crime. [Laughter]

So anyway, I wanted to get Murphy because a letter had just come and I wanted to make sure we got that letter, or seen it. I arranged with Guidera to talk Murphy into going to a show up on Market Street, a particular show. There was George Hard, George Henningsen, myself, and a couple of others we had in the deal, Louis Neiland, and some Alameda policemen.

Now in these rooms that Murphy had there was the old-fashioned sliding doors. They had a sitting room, and the door that went into the bathroom had another door going into Guidera's room. I knew this, because he had told me about it, he drew me a diagram of it, and I didn't dare to go up there without knowing where we were going, because I'm going into the Terminal Hotel down on Market Street.

In order not to get into any difficulty with the San Francisco police, I notified the chief's office, Captain John

Jahnsen: Engler, who was the chief's secretary. I had him come down later. We let him in the back door. When they saw that we were tied into a labor union investigation, they became concerned. Whsst! They got out, because San Francisco is a labor town. They didn't want any part of it. It was an Alameda County case.

But they knew we were there. So if anything came up or happened in the San Francisco Police Department's inspector's bureau, or with anybody else, they'd call them off. They would be "hands off," you see. The San Francisco Police Department didn't want to get tied up into a labor movement investigation if it wasn't their case.

Anyway, I then got into Murphy's room--used skeleton keys. We installed the microphone under the desk and had to run the wire from that room where they'd be talking and where we could hear what was being said.

[Draws diagram] Say this is the elevator shaft coming up here. There's a hallway down here, and it intersects into a hallway here. Here's the elevator door, and there was a hallway up here. Then there's a room in here, and a room in here and a room out here. Down this hallway--this went down here like this--came this way and up this way. There was a door here went into a room in here, there was a room backed in here from a door in this hallway, there was a room backed over in here from that hallway, and then here was Murphy's rooms. Like this.

Now as you came into this room in here this would be the sliding, folding door. Then as you came through here this would be right out on the street here--this would be Market Street. As you came through, here was a bathroom, you see, like this, and on this side was an outside toilet. There was a door here that went into Guidera's room.

What I had to do--we occupied this room. We rented this room--I had somebody go in and rent it, so we knew this room was going to be empty. Now I had to bring the microphone from here into that room. How am I going to get through there.

King: I don't know.

Jahnsen: He had a table here, see? So I drove a nail under the edge of this little table, tied a string around that microphone, soldered

TERMINAL HOTEL - SECOND FLOOR

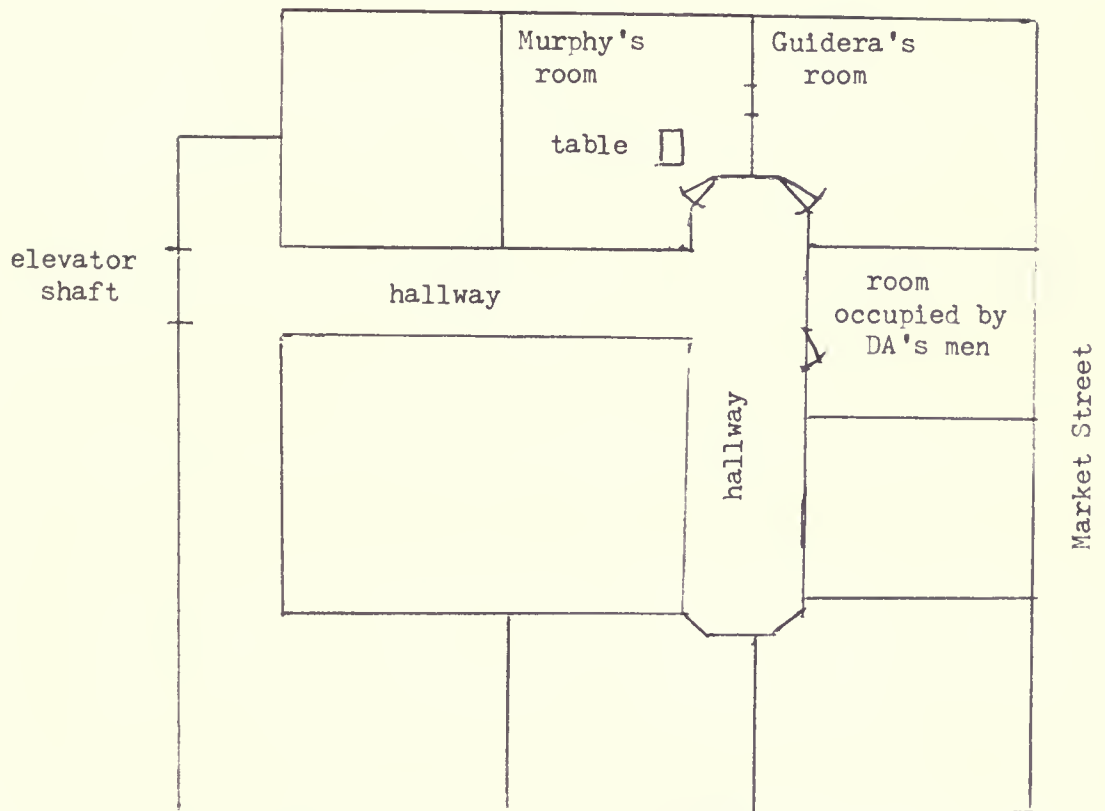


diagram adapted from sketch supplied by Mr. Jahnsen

Jahnsen: the wire and mike together and then I ran the wire down the leg of this table so you couldn't see it, then ran it under the carpet. The carpet was sewed together at this point and I had to take a button hook and had to raise up each seam of the carpet and lace it all underneath there, all the way across the room, then had to run it down, outside, and under the edge of the carpet. Now every time the elevator went up, anyone could look down and see me. Anybody coming out of these doors could see me. [Laughter]

Then I had to lace it all the way down here, around here, and get it in to where we were. This was when most of our people would be working. I had to work in here with Henningsen, sweating our heads off, because Murphy could come home at any moment. He would quit at five o'clock, and this was after four.

I no sooner got the wires in here and just got it working, when Henningsen turned around and tripped over the wire and broke the wire. Well, this put us in a hell of a fix, right in here. All the wire had to be pulled out again.

In the meantime we had to find Guidera and get him to get Murphy out and keep him out, to go to a theater to give me time to get it all in again. Then we went back and completed the job.

Now, when they come back about nine, we had Florence Trombas, and she's another one could tell you about Earl Warren and his strict policies. She was one of the district attorney's stenographers, and she was a good shorthand reporter. Miss Trombas was also a reporter in the [Methias] Warren murder case. She took a lot of the statements in that case.

King: I've never heard of her.

Jahnsen: The district attorney's office can give you her number. She lives on Maude Avenue in San Leandro. Miss Trombas was a lovely little person.

We finally got the microphone in. Then it had to be tested. We had the microphone on a loud speaker.

Meantime, we had found the letter. I immediately sent the letter out with one of our fellows, and had the letter photostated. Then we put it back in the drawer, so it was there.

Jahnsen: It was in Murphy's bedroom, in a locked drawer. We had Guidera quiz Murphy about this letter, and what and when he has heard from Wallace.

Now Murphy was a dedicated labor man. He was loyal to the union. He didn't believe in communism, but he did believe in being very liberal, see? He was against the ship-owners. He would never have gone for the murder; I'm satisfied of this. He might have gone for the roughing up, probably, but not anything as bad as murder.

The upshot was, when I had the police up there, Murphy and Guidera were talking. Some of the language was just non-repeatable. These sailors were talking in language such as: "Mothers this, and mothers that, and the mother so-and-so," and all filthy language. Florence Trombas was taking it all down in shorthand. The police came in there and heard the conversations, but she never whimpered. It didn't bother her at all. She had taken many, many statements. She was very accurate and very rapid.

These police officers didn't remain very long. About eleven o'clock at night, when they [Murphy and Guidera] said, well, they got it all covered and they were going to go to bed, I said, "George [Henningsen], from what we heard, we're going to go and arrest Murphy. We're going to hold him for conspiracy to commit murder. The only thing we can do is just lock him up. But we gotta get a statement from the fellow. We gotta do a lot of work on this thing, so you just bear in mind all that went on, remember everything. Florence, get everything down!"

We went up and knocked on Murphy's door. Now Murphy didn't know that Guidera was the undercover man and that he was going to get the reward. Guidera had to stay under cover so he wouldn't be known. We may want to use him later.

Murphy said, "Who is it?" I said, "Mr. Murphy?" "Yeah." I said, "I got some important information I want to tell you." "Okay."

He's a big guy, and he's lame. He opened the door, and I said, "My name is Jahnsen, and I'm lieutenant of inspectors in the Alameda County district attorney's office, and I want to inform you I'm arresting you for the murder of George Alberts."

Jahnsen: He said, "What?" He started to shut the door. [I said,] "No, you're not going to shut the door, because this place is covered. You've had it." He says, "I don't know anything about George Alberts or any murder or anything else." I said, "You don't?" "No," he said. I then said, "Mr. Murphy, sit down and cool yourself, and I'll tell you some of the things you know about Alberts' murder and about many other things, and about your safe deposit box and paying these guys off."

His face turned white. Guidera's sitting there. Murphy said, "I want you to pay attention to what these officers are telling me. I want to use you as a witness," he said to Guidera. Guidera never answered him.

I said to him, "Mr. Murphy, tonight you told whoever this fellow is (keeping Guidera under cover)--you told your friend here how you sent the money down to Mexico, or down to Southern California to Wallace, and that Wallace is now in El Paso, Texas, and you also have a letter in your top drawer which I have a photostatic copy of and which I took out of there this afternoon, from Mr. Wallace asking you for the money, and which you went to the safe deposit box and got the money and sent it down--"

Murphy said, "How the hell do you know this?" I said, "Mr. Murphy, you don't think we're foolish do you? You can't commit murder and expect to get away with it, Mr. Murphy. I want to be honest with you, I want to be fair with you, and I want you to recognize too that you better be fair. I can't make you any promises, but one thing I can assure you, that if I were you I'd tell the truth in this whole thing."

He got up and he walked up and down the room, stomped up and down the room. He walked around and he looked at me, and he gave me a lot of tough looks.

I said, "Mr. Murphy, looks don't bother me. I've looked at tougher guys than you. That won't bother me. The only thing I can tell you is, you had Mr. King here this afternoon. You had him here the other day, and you discussed this thing--discussed a lot of it." He'd already told this over the microphone, and Miss Trombas had it in the book.

I says, "This plan was very well laid, Mr. Murphy, but you don't know that Mr. King is putting you on the spot, and you're gonna be held for the murder. Except for one thing,

Jahnsen: Mr. Murphy--just one thing will probably save you. If you just reach under that table under there, and see what you find, then you can tell Mr. King that we have him down on the record, too."

So he reached under, and he found the microphone, and said, "My God!" His face just turned purple and it turned red, and it turned white. I said, "Everything that you fellows have talked about is down. You want to hear it? Miss Trombas, will you come in and bring your book in? I want you to read what we just said." So she comes in. By this time we had a couple of other inspectors present.

So she reads the whole thing to him.

King: Complete with all the "mothers--"?

Jahnsen: Yes. I then said, "All you have to do is bring the other books in for the last few days. They're in the vault now and locked up and we can't bring you those. But I think that's pretty good evidence, isn't it, Mr. Murphy, that you're involved?"

"One thing you can do, Mr. Murphy, if you want some advice, I can take you over to Oakland to the district attorney's office, and Mr. Ralph Hoyt, I feel sure, will take a statement from you of the truth. If you want to give him a statement of the truth, now is the time to give it. Of your connections, your associations, King's connections, all these other fellows' connections, including Wallace and Sakovitz. If you want to give also what Red Ramsay gave, you can give Mr. Hoyt the whole story. Now is the time. It's now after midnight. I'll call from your room here, and I'll ask Mr. Hoyt if he'll be pleased to come down and give you this opportunity.

He looked at Guidera, and I said, "I don't know who this fellow is," (keeping Guidera under cover) "but I'll ask him. 'Do you think that's a wise thing? You heard all this, you've been sitting here. Do you think it's a wise thing? Would you advise Mr. Murphy not to do it?' Who's gonna hold the bag? Who's gonna prove that-- King is gonna deny it, and he's gonna blame you. You got the safe deposit box, you've got the keys, you paid the money, we have copies of the letters. Who's gonna die? You discussed it here tonight; we have the record. We're gonna hold this fellow Guidera here as a witness to this thing. He's gonna go to jail too." He [Guidera] says, "I think I'd go. If I were you, Murphy, I'd go."

Jahnsen: I got on the phone and called Ralph Hoyt, and I sent for a fellow; they brought him right down to the district attorney's office, got some more reporters right down there. I took Murphy right across the Bay on the Creek Route ferry, in those days; and when we got there, Mr. Murphy told the whole story. Nobody knew about it.

We returned Murphy again, in the morning, but I said, "Murphy, I want to tell you now, don't you go any place with King's people." I didn't want him to go any place because I didn't want anything to come out and then have him revert, and change his story, like Conner did, see?

I said, "The thing to do is don't go any place, because these guys are going to take you out and they're gonna try and dump you, the same as they did Alberts. They know you know everything; they're gonna try to dump you. God only knows how far this is going, because we've got some other information that isn't gonna be good. So don't go out with them."

He had to be back there to be in his office at eight o'clock in the morning. We got him back over at six o'clock. He went to his room, and he went down to work. I said, "Here's the number. You call me if anything happens."

He called me, about ten o'clock. He said, "Some of the beef squad want to take me out to the beach for lunch." I said, "Don't go! Don't go! Remember what I told you!" It just happened to dovetail in, what I had warned him about. It wasn't planned. I just had a surmise that maybe they would go out to lunch. Murphy might loosen his tongue, Murphy might go away, and we might lose Murphy. I didn't want to take the chance. Murphy says, "I'm afraid--" Murphy was pretty much sure that they were gonna do something, so Murphy had to watch his step every day from there on in.

After Mr. Hoyt got the story, we then decided we'd better arrest everybody we could. We'd better get King and we'd better get these other people. We'd better get Ramsay and do it right away, because we had this statement. He already swore to it, and it was notarized. It hadn't been transcribed, but it was there. He couldn't back off of this. Hoyt was a witness, the secretary--we had a court reporter on this one--and he couldn't get away from it.

Jahnsen: We got together and we went over to San Francisco. We wanted to arrest King of the Marine Firemen's Union. Well, we had to go into the Firemen's Union hall to arrest a fellow, and this could be a lot of trouble. We decided the best thing to do would be to arrest Murphy. Told Murphy that we were going to come over, his being cooperative, and arrest him, but the purpose of it was not to think we were double crossing him, but it was a part of the plan, which he knew. Then we'd arrest King. Then we'd go down and arrest Ramsay, so that word wouldn't get around, and these fellows wouldn't fly the coop. Wallace and Sakovitz had gone now.

We went over to the Marine Firemen's Union. We got ahold of the San Francisco Harbor Station to a lieutenant who was there and took him along with us, and told him we wanted to serve this warrant on this fellow Murphy for murder without going through the inspector's bureau. We felt that we didn't want to involve the San Francisco police in the total investigation, but we wanted them to be along because we were going to make the arrest in San Francisco. Not that we didn't have the power to do it, but this would be good policy. It would let them in on the thing, see.

When we went down, we went in there, and I went up and asked for Mr. Murphy and Mr. King. Mr. Murphy, as prearranged plan, was at his job at that time. A couple of police officers and a couple of our inspectors were with me.

I went up and I told Murphy that I was arresting him, and going to take him into custody, and we wanted to interrogate him, and also we wanted to take Mr. King in and talk to him about Murphy. We took them right over to Alameda County and we began taking statements from King and Murphy. In the meantime, I went right down to the Fish Reduction Union, and arrested Ramsay.

King: They don't have some automatic right to have a lawyer, at this point?

Jahnsen: Oh, no! They didn't have a lawyer at all. They didn't get a chance to get a lawyer. They were not given any chance until after they were booked in jail. They would have had [George] Andersen, [Aubrey] Grossman and [Herbert] Resner. They were the union's lawyers, whom King wanted. These lawyers were representing these various unions. We knew this, so we didn't

Jahnsen: give them a chance to get a lawyer at that time. There was no purpose. There was no purpose in giving them a lawyer.

They asked for their lawyer. We said, "Sure. You can phone your lawyer." In the meantime, they got talkative. Some of them talked, some of them didn't talk.

Now Red Ramsay was a Canadian citizen, and he came to this country. Got in the unions, and I'm satisfied some of these labor leaders today, without mentioning any names, interceded with the governor's office on his behalf to get him a pardon, because he was going to be deported from this country after he got out of prison. He was going to be deported to Canada, if it hadn't been for the fact that he changed his story and confessed. Now when Ramsay confessed, he told us the whole story and he confessed to the whole thing, and then he became afraid of the treatment he would receive at the hands of his former associates, so he double-crossed us and changed the story again.

Now to go back to the statements of Wallace--we didn't have Sakovitz. Sakovitz became a member of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, I think it was--the Communist group in Spain.

King: Fought in the Spanish civil war.

Jahnsen: Yes. And then he went on over to fight with the French Foreign Legion in Algeria. Then he came to Italy to join the American forces, and when he did that, while he was there, his fingerprints were sent in and the FBI checked them and they learned they had Sakovitz, who was on their wanted list. They were bringing him back to stand trial, and while he's on the ship he disappears. At sea! Never been heard of since.

Maybe they didn't want to bring this up again and have Sakovitz also appear as a witness against King et al. Maybe somebody felt that Sakovitz needed a bath, and they put him in the Atlantic Ocean. At least that's what we felt happened to him.

King: Now, these men were subsequently paroled, weren't they?

Jahnsen: By Governor Culbert Olson.

Jahnsen: But coming back to Wallace now, we knew that Wallace was down and trying to get across the border at Brownsville, in Texas. We knew that the money had been sent to him. George Hard and Inspector Lloyd Wendland of the Alameda police department flew down, and we telephoned down there and talked to the law enforcement people in Brownsville. We knew where this fellow was going to call for this money, to have him shadowed.

He went from Brownsville--I think it was from a little below Brownsville, and then he went up to Brownsville to see if he couldn't get a ship out of there. He didn't get the money, so he decided to take a freight train out. He was in the freight yards when they arrested him. By this time George Hard and Wendland were there with the Brownsville police department. It wasn't Brownsville--he was at this other place.

He was apprehended, and I knew that Wallace would talk and could be handled if treated kindly. At least I felt very sure that if the thing was handled properly, Wallace would talk, because he was scared to death. He was afraid that he couldn't get across the border and get away. Sakovitz had deserted him.

King: Let me just ask you: I thought it was easy to get across the border. Was it hard at that time?

Jahnsen: Well, I wouldn't say it would be easy. He didn't have any money. What was he going to do over there with no money? Naturally going across the borders he could walk over, at Tijuana and other places, but he had to have money.

So he got to Brownsville, and he was waiting for the money. He wanted to get a ship and to get out. But if he could go across the border, he'd be in Mexico, but where was he going to get a ship out of Mexico. So he'd have to get one out of Brownsville. How is he going to ship out of Brownsville? Now he must have heard and knew these arrests had been made. Hard and Wendland phoned us about these circumstances.

I said to them, 'We'll send a car down to meet you. You fly from Brownsville and we'll pick you up with a car, and we'll bring you across from Nevada into California. We'll bring you in and then you stop some place along the line like Visalia, or some other place, and phone us, on the way.'

Jahnsen: "What we want you to do is, when you meet him"--and I cautioned the fellows that were leaving here in the car to meet them what they must do. While Wallace was in the car, while returning him, is to go across the desert blowing their sirens. "Make a lot of noise and always be looking back, and informing Wallace, 'Nobody's going to hurt you, nobody'll take you away from us.'"

He didn't have any money, so they were to buy him anything he wants. "Buy him some clothes if he wants them," [I told them.] "Buy him a necktie if he wants it. Buy him a suit if he wants it. Buy him tobacco, cigarettes. Treat him with all the kindness and the protection that would overcome any fear he may have. Show him love and affection and get him over his fears, and this'll be fine. We'll tell you what to do when you phone us in California.

"Make sure that he gets the impression that if anybody is trying to catch him and trying to take him away from you, that you're dodging these people and you're getting away. Particularly in the desert where nobody's going to worry about the sirens being blown."

They did this very thing. When they got up--I think it was at Modesto, or some place along in there, I don't remember now--they phoned us and we told them to meet us at the White-cotton Hotel in Berkeley. I said, "When you get downstairs, and you are ready to come up, phone our room upstairs, because I'll have it all set up." Mr. Ralph Hoyt was there and there was a table there. Doris Bristol and Hilda Honnett, I think, were the stenographers we had there. Hilda Honnett, I think, is available in Oakland.

I said, "I want to meet you as you come out of the elevator. I'll meet you at the top of the elevator. Don't talk to him at all. Don't promise him anything. Don't tell him he'd better confess. Don't say a word. All you gotta do is just show him anything he wants. Buy him a good dinner. Buy him anything he wants. Costs you \$100, okay. We'll approve it.

"Just go ahead. Treat him right, so nobody can say that he didn't get good, fair, kind treatment all along the line. Feel sorry for him. Don't say anything about Sakovitz, don't say anything about Wallace, don't say anything about Murphy or anything else."

Jahnsen: Now psychologically this would have an effect on his mind. He would say, "Well, these fellows are protecting me; they're my friends."

The minute he got off the elevator, I said, "George, how are you? It's good to see you back!" I put my arm around him. I said, "Come on in. I've got everything all set in here. I want you to talk to Mr. Hoyt, the assistant district attorney." I said, "Ramsay has told the whole story. We'll read you the story that Ramsay told and how he confessed the whole thing. Murphy confessed the whole thing. King and these guys are trying to blame you and Sakovitz for the murder. Mr. Hoyt's here to take your story, so you can tell him the whole truth."

I said, "Here's Mr. Hoyt. And this is Miss Bristol, one of our secretaries. George, tell them exactly how you got over. Remember how you got to the ship, how you left there, and how Ramsay come over there and met you when you were over there at Encinal Terminal, after you worked Alberts over." I had to give him a little lead on it. I said, "Tell Mr. Hoyt the whole story."

"All right, all right," he said. He spilled the whole story of how they went over and how they killed Alberts and everything else. He said, "Sakovitz killed him. I didn't kill him. I tamped up, but Sakovitz went in and he knifed him, see." So he told the whole story, right down the line, which is a matter of record.

We said, "That's fine. Now we're going to take you to dinner." In the meantime we took him down to the district attorney's office and we had Dr. Hamlin and Dr. Black. Dr. Black was the medical director of Alameda County and Dr. Hamlin was the county surgeon, two fine men.

We took him down and had them talk to him. They chatted with him. They were head of the county psychiatric set up. They were satisfied the man was sound, psychiatrically. So we then locked him up in the Piedmont city jail for the time being. Then we put him in the county jail, kept him isolated, so nobody could get to him.

Jahnsen: Conner had fled up to Seattle, and the FBI arrested him up there for us. At this time Conner kept on saying he wanted his own lawyer, he didn't want any other lawyers.

King: Who's the one that Public Defender Shea defended? Was that Ramsay? Willard Shea I guess defended one of them.

Jahnsen: He defended Wallace.

Conner said, "I want my own lawyer." There was a lawyer up there in Seattle--it's in the record--and this lawyer came down. We'd locked Wallace up in the county jail. He wouldn't talk to anybody. He'd talk to his lawyer. In the meantime, King and Ramsay, and their lawyers, Andersen, Grossman and Resner and these fellows, were outside. This lawyer Conner had was talking with them. They didn't want him in the case. They wanted the Marine Firemen's Union to pay the money to these--

Wait a minute. It'll come to me now. I'm just getting it, too. Not Levinski, but something like that. Maybe it was Levinski.

Anyway, to get his confession--the thing was coming up in court. I think it was before Judge [Fred V.] Wood, and they were down there holding some preliminaries about bail and one thing and another. We had Conner in an office out of the county jail, over at the district attorney's office, and we brought him over there because this attorney wanted to talk to him in private. We said, "We'll give you any office you want. If you're afraid they might be wired, take any one you want. We assure you they're not wired. Mr. Warren wouldn't stand for that. Take his office, take any office. You can pick any one you want. Pick a courtroom, or anything. We'll put people outside. You don't have to worry about this."

Conner won't talk. He's got a cane and he had the flu or a bad cold. So I had him look out the window, and he saw the lawyers talking out there with King's, Ramsay's, and Conner's lawyers--these other lawyers--talking out there. He said, "Will you go down and tell my lawyer that I want to see him? He hasn't saw me, and I want to see him."

I said, "Well, you look out the window and I'll go down and tell him." They were just--oh, heck, it couldn't have been any further than that house out there. He saw me go up

Jahnsen: and talk to them. I told Levinski, I said, "The fella wants you to see him. He wants to talk to you." He says, "Well tell him I can't see him now. When I'm ready I'll talk to him." I said, "Well, okay. He's up there in the window." I said, "You see him looking out the window? He's looking at you." He give 'im the hand.

Conner was disturbed because he wasn't getting anywhere with these Commie lawyers. So Levinski brushed him back, he didn't want to talk to him then. I came back, and I said, "Well, you saw what he did, he didn't want any part of you, he didn't want to talk to you. He said when he was ready he'd talk to you. They're gonna be down in court. You're going to go down in court now for an arraignment and he's going to be there and he'll talk to you there."

When we took Conner down to court, Levinski was sitting in the jury box. This is the old courthouse. Conner says, "I want to talk to you." Levinski says, "When I'm ready to talk to you, I'll talk to you. I don't want to talk to you." He was annoying him. Which was very poor psychology on the lawyer's part.

The judge then said there would be no bail, they'd commit him to the custody of the sheriff. I said, "Well, let's go up." We took him out the side door and took him up the back stairs to the DA's office.

King: This is Judge Wood, who's the judge at this time?

Jahnsen: Yes. I asked Conner if this was his lawyer and "if he's gonna help you." Conner replied, "Yes." I said, "This fellow is going to let you hold the bag. To me it don't look very good. If he was my lawyer, he'd better talk to me before he talks to anybody else."

Conner says, "You can't tell me that." I said, "Well, what did he say to you in the courtroom? Why isn't he up here? Look, this morning at ten o'clock you saw him out the window, he waved to you, and now he didn't want to talk to you even in court." I said, "We're going to take you to lunch, and we'll see what happens after lunch."

We took him up to Spiro's restaurant on 14th Street. It's Valentines, now. We sat down, and Myron Harris, who was taken into the defense by one of these people to defend him--who is

Jahnsen: a good criminal lawyer in Oakland--he was sitting there eating with some other people. They see us with Conner.

I said, "Oh, hello, Myron," and we're talking, and they saw this guy with us, and I say, "We have one of your friends, here." Myron couldn't deny this. He saw us eating with Conner. He saw us buying him a steak dinner. I said, "We're just feeding one of your friends, taking him out to dinner." When we got back to the DA's office, I said, "Well, we're gonna have to lock you up now. We can't keep you any longer for your attorney, Mr. Levinski. Mr. Warren's in his office. If you'd like to go in and tell him the story, you've got your last chance. You can tell him." He said, "All right. I'll tell him."

He got up and I took him in, and I told Mr. Warren, "Conner is going to talk. He's gonna tell you the whole story. We'll get somebody in to take this statement down." Mr. Warren said, "How do you know?" I said, "I know he will. I'm satisfied this man's at the point where he's gonna talk. He'll tell you the whole story."

Conner came in to Mr. Warren's office and sat down, and told Mr. Warren the whole story. It was taken down in shorthand. In order to prove that Conner was not given the so-called third degree, not harmed in any way, we had Dr. Black and Dr. Hamlin come down and examine him. He had a bad cold. Going to make room for him out at Highland Hospital, and make sure that he had the finest treatment.

They (Hamlin and Black) interviewed him at the district attorney's office and they interviewed him again at the hospital. He told them the whole story, which never came out in court. He repeated the whole confession to them, the whole thing. They took him out to Highland Hospital. He was under the care of the physicians, the doctors. He came back and later stood trial and his evidence was presented. And that's how we obtained Conner's confession.

King: So it's really true then, if you are fair to people and you treat them decently they eventually come around and tell you the truth?

Jahnsen: Well, I am sure they would.

Jahnsen: I knew if we hit the right thought and the right line of thinking with these people, the same as we did in these other cases, they would tell you the truth. Not only in one, but in many, many cases I got statements and confessions and never put a hand on a person. Treated them fair, treated them right.

King: How was it in the office, when Warren was boss. Was he very good to his employees as well? I mean, was there good promotion and things like that, as well as being fair to the defendants?

Jahnsen: Was he fair to them?

King: Well, you know, was it easy to get a raise--

Jahnsen: Well, let me say this: I think he was very just and fair; and let me say this: he didn't believe in trading. Now over in other district attorney's offices, and you were speaking about San Francisco, they would accept pleas during Matt Brady's time to lesser offenses, but Warren wouldn't. That's one of the reason the San Francisco police department wanted to settle cases they had an interest in in Alameda County. There was no bargaining in Warren's office.

King: I see. Because they wouldn't accept lesser pleas of guilty to settle the cases.

Jahnsen: That is correct. Where it warranted taking a lesser charge, Warren would take it. Where you would be going on a shoestring, it would be better to do that, but it wasn't a trade-off just to get a plea. Warren's record of convictions were great, but with a lot of district attorneys where they claimed one hundred percent or ninety percent convictions, they were pleas of guilty to lesser offenses.

Or many of the DA's were, in those days--not to single out any particular district attorney, or anything. Mr. Al Bagshaw was another DA who wouldn't trade off for guilty pleas to lesser offenses. No, he tried all these criminals that were in San Quentin, committing murders over there, and crimes in the prison. Most district attorneys didn't do that. Some of them did.

King: I understood that almost everybody took lesser pleas at that time.

Jahnsen: No, I don't think so. I think depending upon the evidence, the witnesses, and the facts, sometimes. Why put the county to an expensive trial when the same results could be accomplished by accepting pleas of guilty.

King: I was going to ask you about how Judge [Frank] Ogden gets to replace Judge Wood. Why did that happen? Afterwards there's a lot of criticism in the paper, because Ogden had come out of the DA's office.

Jahnsen: I don't think there was anything out of the ordinary in that at all. Judge Wood was handling a lot of these cases, and I think Judge Wood was very happy to get away from so many of these cases. Judge Frank Ogden was a very fine judge, a very honorable man. His time in the district attorney's office wasn't too long, and he was in both the civil and criminal departments. He naturally aspired to be a judge in the superior court. I don't think there was any reason for him being assigned to criminal cases. This assignment would have been done by the presiding judge--

King: Of the superior court, yes.

Jahnsen: --[who] would assign these cases.

JAPANESE ESPIONAGE AND RELOCATION

- King: Jumping ahead a few years, you were involved in the investigations of the Japanese, weren't you?
- Jahnsen: Yes. The University archives* has all of the information that was dug up on the removal of the Japanese from California.
- King: Do they?
- Jahnsen: That information caused the removal of the Japanese. General [John] DeWitt, 6th Army Area commander, removed them.
- King: Now how did they get that?
- Jahnsen: Well, we had copies and they were filed with the University. I understand that they are in the Archives, and the rest of those records were given to General DeWitt. Where they are, I don't know, but we went over and gave them to him.
- King: How did this get started, this relocation effort in California?
- Jahnsen: Well, it was just one of those things that common sense would tell you what to do.

Before Pearl Harbor there was some reason, but not too much to suspect espionage and sabotage. The FBI would probably be the agency; I don't think military intelligence, but they may have had it.

*Japanese-American Evacuation and Resettlement Records, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Jahnsen: Of course when Pearl Harbor came along, and they start sinking ships off of San Luis Obispo, Mr. Warren and I went to Admiral [John L.] Greenslade, who was then with the Western Sea Frontier. Admiral Greenslade said, "We don't have anything, General"--meaning Attorney General--"to defend the West Coast!" Warren said, "Well, my God! We have thousands and thousands of Japanese here. We could have an invasion here." Admiral Greenslade said, "Everything that we had in fighting forces we have sent out to the Pacific. Whether they let it get out there or not, we don't know. But we've sent [it] out to defend the islands."

Now the Japs could have taken the islands. I remember 1915, along in the middle of winter, I was out there and there were 79,000 Japs in the islands at that time.

King: Oh! I didn't know that.

Jahnsen: At the time of Pearl Harbor, in 1941, 79,000 was a mighty small figure. The espionage that went on there was terrific.

When we begin to find out that they were sinking ships, it became apparent that we ought to find out where all the Japs were in California, and if there was an invasion what we could do. Meantime Mr. Warren had coordinated all the law enforcement agencies in California through the California Peace Officers Association, State Sheriffs Association, and the County Peace Officers Association, and many of the other organizations; District Attorneys Association.

King: Do you think Warren was perhaps the prime mover in this concern about the Japanese here in California? Was he really the man who sort of spearheaded this movement? Or was there a lot of pressure for it?

Jahnsen: Well, you used the word "prime mover," and I don't think that is the proper term. It's like priming an engine to get it going! [Laughter] If you meant one of those that initiated the move, I think it would be more fitting.

King: All right. I'll change terms for that.

Jahnsen: I would say he did a lot toward initiating it. I don't think he did it with any thought of being, you might say, cruel, or trying to injure Japanese of American ancestry, but to protect the country.

King: I understand.

Jahnsen: Because we had a war going on. Mr. Warren wanted to know where the Japanese people were and if they were around anyplace that could be vital to us. The Division of Highways has very fine maps. I don't know if you've ever seen those maps, but they are very much in detail.

King: Like topographical maps?

Jahnsen: No, not exactly. I may have some around here someplace. These maps show you much information. For instance, if a new airport was going to be built, this would be shown on the map, the outlines of it. Where the railroad lines were located, it would show these. Where the highways went, and access routes, etc., oil pumping lines and refineries.

We obtained two copies and we sent one of those maps to the district attorneys, fifty-eight county district attorneys, and we asked them to cooperate with their sheriff, their county assessor, city assessors, and so forth, and to obtain local maps and to list on these maps, and mark and indicate, and they could copy the big map, if they wanted, for their own use, but to send us those maps back, giving us in detail as much information as they could as to where the Japanese were, the amount of land they had, where it was located in relation to vital installations.

Remember, the Japanese under the Japanese Exclusion Act that was authored by Hiram Johnson, governor years ago, they couldn't own property in California, so it was in the names of their children. We asked the county agents to give us the names and who else was living on there, who were not permanent residents or who were relatives, and who were aliens that came here--that probably spoke English, but they were foreigners, they couldn't get American citizenship.

King: Now how could you get this kind of information in counties?

Jahnsen: Well, this came through the sheriff, or through police departments, or through the county assessor.

King: Did you have to register if you were an alien in those days?

Jahnsen: No. There wasn't any alien registration. Immigration--yes, immigration probably had records of them.

King: Well, I was just wondering if the--

Jahnsen: What the sheriff would do, he would say--like up in Siskiyou County or San Joaquin County--he knew these Japanese, like many they've got there around Lodi, there was a lot of Japanese farming up there. Lots of them were grape farmers, and so forth.

Well, the sheriff knew these people. He would go out and talk to them, he would go and look on the county records, the assessor would give him the names of who the owners were, he would go out there and get the information about who was living there. It didn't take too much time with this tremendous force working over the state.

When all these maps came in, we had a master chart on which we marked all of the vital things, such as where every proposed airport and oil and communication lines were located. Japanese were all around these vital installations.

Where the main transmission of communication lines ran up and down the state, the Japanese were there. They were centered on Grant Avenue next to Trans-Pacific Broadcast of the telephone company. Where the main railroad lines ran up and down the coast in several places, they ran across Japanese property, and there was nothing to stop them taking the railroad out. The main oil lines that were pumping from the desert came across Japanese property. At all of these places the Japanese appeared to be strategically set up. It looked as though pressing one button they could go to work and very shortly they'd take over the whole state of California.

Now you say was Mr. Warren a "prime mover" in it? I would say that all he had to do was to show these to General DeWitt, and General DeWitt was the prime mover! But he was an instigator. He was one of those that was interested in seeing that the proper people were advised. He would be derelict as attorney general--he was the chief law enforcement officer of the state. He was charged with this.

We knew that a lot of these things were happening. We sat on telephone switchboards at day and nighttime, answering questions and advising the proper authorities. The main transmission lines that went across the Pacific--the Japanese took all the lines out to Pearl Harbor. The only thing that

Jahnsen: was open was the Trans-Pacific Broadcast, that was operating a scrambling machine out of Grant Avenue. If this was destroyed, all the communications across the Pacific would be gone, a very vital part of the war effort.

Well, Mr. Warren knew this. We always figured the only thing why great sabotage didn't happen was that the job was so big for the Japanese and that they didn't have the equipment, the forces to do this. They had to consolidate and reorganize their forces before this could happen.

King: I see.

Jahnsen: One of the things that would stop them from doing this would be General MacArthur. He had gone out to the South Pacific years before he'd resigned from the army. He was the youngest chief of staff we had. His father, Arthur MacArthur, before him, was a tremendous man.

He went out there and he organized the Philippine constabulary. He set up the defenses at Corregidor. This man could see far ahead, and could anticipate what could and did happen.

King: That's right.

Jahnsen: But he didn't get credit for a lot of this. Nevertheless, when MacArthur kept the bonfire going at Corregidor out in the Philippines, he moved off into Australia, as was said earlier, and organized all Southeast Asia. He put the British, the Australians, the New Zealanders together, trained them for the return to retake the Philippines.

King: That's all MacArthur, isn't it?

Jahnsen: Yes. When MacArthur completed this, they had to take island after island. He had to come back island by island, like they're playing checkers.

Mr. Warren then showed this information to General DeWitt, and General DeWitt just realized that if he waited too long, many things could blow up along the Pacific Coast of the United States.

King: What was DeWitt's position? Was he--

Jahnsen: He was commanding general of the Western Defense Command. He was lieutenant general at that time.

King: How did he feel about the Japanese? Was he in favor of this line?

Jahnsen: He issued the order excluding them.

King: He did issue the order excluding them?

Jahnsen: Yes. Then that brought into play the Federal Bureau of Investigation, also the United States Internal Revenue Service and Immigration Service and state and local law enforcement. The California attorney general's office went down and helped the FBI and others to pick these Japanese people up, who we felt were ready to help the Japanese invasion of California. We had to segregate the sheep from the goats, the locals from the foreigners. They had a number of Japanese who were members of foreign dual-citizenship organizations. One, I think, was called the Humushikai clan.

I remember one little Japanese girl pleading with us. She appeared to be a very nice little girl. I think it was in Paso Robles, or down at King City. She pleaded with me, and said, "Please don't take me. I'm not a Buddhist. I'm not for this. I'm a Christian--I'm not a Buddhist. I'm not for this--I'm a Christian." I said, "Well, I can't do anything about it. Orders are orders and I'm just here to help out."

We got them all together in this little community of Paso Robles--

King: Nobody protested? Nobody objected?

Jahnsen: How could they? A general exclusion order was issued by the commanding general of the Western Defense Command for the protection of the country.

They were taken in and sent to Tule Lake. The federal agencies were under the orders of the commanding general, as we were at war.

Then the Internal Revenue come in and took over all the property, which I think was poorly handled, in a lot of ways. Some of their property was lost or stolen; never could be

Jahnsen: properly identified or returned. Some of these people were heavily invested. Their property was more or less confiscated and later sold.

And I knew some--well, I don't want to mention any names--but some people managed to be able to buy some of these vineyards and orchards. They later made lots of money on the sale of these properties. This was unfair. It was guaranteed that these things would be returned.

I remember serving some of the search warrants and taking property and giving receipts for this property. Everything they had we gave them a receipt for, under the limited period of time and the speed with which you were operating. These people were just taken right off their property, men, women, and children. Well, it would be like Hitler putting the Jews in the freight car.

King: That's right.

Jahnsen: It's a helluva way to handle these things, but they weren't gassed like the Jews were.

King: No, they weren't.

Jahnsen: But they were transported to certain places and they were quartered. Maybe the quarters weren't the best, but this thing happened overnight. Some of them were sent further east. Many of them declared their loyalty to the U.S.A.

A couple of Japanese that I had working for me fought with Mark Clark in Italy, shot up with shrapnel. They came from Japan years ago with their folks and were raised over in Napa. They had been put away. He joined the American army. Many of them were loyal, very loyal, and very fine people.

King: Oh, I think most of them were probably loyal.

Jahnsen: Yes. Very fine people. Just recently I received an invitation to go over to the Buddhist Temple for their affair.

No, I don't think it was unfair, but who was going to say what Japanese were loyal. Matter of fact, the Chinese went out and had a lot of badges made and stating: "I'm a Chinaman--I'm Chinese." Afraid they were going to be picked up.

King: That's interesting.

Jahnsen: They wore them in San Francisco and around other communities in the state.

King: Who in the DA's office set up the Communist party records?

Jahnsen: I think people that could give you a lot of information on this would be Chester Flint, who was an inspector in the district attorney's office. I know I helped with it, but he had that assignment. He was very well versed in it. A very capable person and a very fine man.

King: Did he work closely with that American Legion Committee that was set up in Oakland at some point, with a man named Zollner?

Jahnsen: Elmer Zollner. No, I wouldn't say he worked closely with this. He probably helped them, but Elmer Zollner wasn't the man that did this. This was a sort of offshoot out of Post Five. I've been a member of Post Five for about forty years. I can't tell you exactly.

THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S STAFF: A PERSONAL VIEW

Broad Representation

King: Really? Were all the people in the DA's office members of the Legion, or the Masons, or one of those?

Jahnsen: Oh no. No, Mr. Warren never worked that way. Mr. Warren never belived in, you might say, having just one group or one type of organization or associations, in the district attorney's office.

Warren believed that he should have representatives of all faiths, of all races, of all organizations. He believed that this was good, sound politics. In other words, if we were going to prosecute a Jew, for instance, he would always make sure there was a Jew in on the trial to help prosecute the case, so there couldn't be any claim of persecution. If he was going to try a labor man he always made sure there'd be an investigator or somebody connected with labor was in on the trial or the investigation.

King: I see. He always had somebody on his staff sort of representing--

Jahnsen: That's right. And if he was going to try a Mason, he always made sure that there was a Past Master or some Masonic member in there.

I can cite a lot of these individual cases where this took place. No question about it. This was not only to be fair in the trial, but that the people had representation in the district attorney's office, people that they could go to that they could feel they had confidence in. For instance if

Jahnsen: it was--again going back to the Jewish people, the synagogue that the individual belonged to might have someone go to some Jew in the office, or maybe talk to him, to get first-hand information.

The same way with the Irish and others. We had Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus, and a strong Irish Catholic in the office.

Members of the DA's Staff

King: Harry Miller, I guess, was the Jew, wasn't he?

Jahnsen: Harry Miller! Yes, sure. He died in the synagogue while he was at the pulpit. He dropped dead there. A very devout man.

I think Cecil Mosbacher--I don't know whether she is or not. I always thought Cecil Mosbacher was probably Jewish, and a very lovely person. I think she was the most intelligent woman I have ever met. I think she is, and a very lovable type of a person. I mean this way--she had warmth and kindness and understanding, and she could have sympathy. She was a social worker before she studied law. She graduated from Cal.

King: Oh, really? I didn't know that.

Jahnsen: Yes. She has a very fine background, a terrific person. She never married. She and her mother lived together up on San Domingo Road, right by the Claremont Hotel. Then she moved downtown.

She was a close friend of Judge Tyrell, who was a very good Irish Catholic, and was in the political field. Judge [Edward] Tyrell had a part in getting Earl Warren to appoint Cecil a deputy in his office. I think he would have appointed her anyway. Mr. Warren was a little disappointed that she didn't go with us to the attorney general's office. But she stayed there because Mr. Hoyt promised her that she could be a trial deputy.

Jahnsen: Cecil and I have talked this over several times. In fact at the last meeting in San Francisco, where Ted Westphal retired--we were at his party--Cecil and Helen MacGregor and I and Lowell Jensen--we all sat together and talked. I'm a great admirer of both these women.

Lloyd Jester had a part in the district attorney's-- [He was] later chief of police in Albany, and then came back [to the DA's office.]

Estelle Jacobson--I don't know whether you can find her or not. She had a lot to do with the attorney general's office, and also the gambling ship cases. She was a secretary that was assigned to the investigation. When we were out on the patrol boats talking back and forth to [Tony] Cornero, she was taking it all down in shorthand, and the boats were bobbling up and down! [Laughter] She's terrific, and an outstanding secretary.

Evelyn Peterson, who was my secretary in the attorney general's office, also was the secretary to Warren Olney. She lives out in east Oakland. She was a very lovely person. Mr. Warren brought her in and assigned her to the investigative branch. She worked there for a long while. She later married Tommy Whelan, who was district attorney of San Diego county, and then left the office.

King: So she might still be around in Oakland--somebody might know.

Jahnsen: Oh, yes. Helen MacGregor would know where she is, I'm sure. She should remember a lot of things in the district attorney's office.

There's probably others. George Perkins, who was a Past Master of the Masonic Lodge helped try a lot of these cases. One case--I guess it was the Lusitania Corporation--fellow named Cofelt and Sirales et al. This was a phony insurance company that they set up. George Perkins was a Shriner and so was Sirales, one defendant. This fellow Cofelt was another Mason. Mr. Coakley, who tried the case, and some of these defendants were Portuguese and Catholics, and Frank was the Catholic side of the prosecution's case.

Masonry

King: How do you become a Mason? Does somebody have to propose you, is that the point?

Jahnsen: Yes and no. It's very simple. The desire has to come from within the person interested. Catholic could be a Mason? In fact when I was Master of my Lodge we took in a fellow that was a very fine Catholic boy, and he later became Master of the Lodge. But it has to be free within yourself. You must be free to make the decision.

If you wanted to become a Mason--no woman can become a Mason. She can join the Eastern Star and other ladies Masonic groups. You decide to become one, then you would have to apply to some member of a Lodge. You would have to tell him that you want to be a Mason, and your reasons for wanting to be a Mason. Then he would give you an application, and you could file that with the necessary initiation fee.

King: So you don't need somebody to stand up for you?

Jahnsen: No. But then what would happen, they would investigate your background to determine your qualifications. Then the investigating committee would render a report to the Lodge, and it would be determined then whether or not you could be admitted. This would be based upon the members of the Lodge voting on it.

King: Well what kind of reasons, for instance at the time when you say you were becoming a Mason, would there be for rejecting anyone.

Jahnsen: Well, let's say that a man was not of good moral character, he was dishonest, and he was not right with his family--he was out chasing around with other women, or he was unreliable, he wasn't morally sound. You have to be morally right.

Practically every president we've had has been a Mason. Usually a Thirty-third Degree Mason. George Washington was a Mason.

Staff Relations

Jahnsen: Mr. Warren was an outstanding administrator. There was never any friction in the office.

King: I see. He kept everything going very smoothly.

Jahnsen: Yes and everybody talked openly and freely--there wasn't any feeling. We had the greatest admiration for one another's ability and their honesty and their integrity.

King: Were you all very close in the office? Were you a circle of friends, kind of, in the office? Did you see each other outside?

Jahnsen: Oh, yes. As a matter of fact, I set up the idea in the office of having the birthday parties. One of the wives sent a cake down because her husband or somebody was having a birthday, and the girls had birthday parties. I said, "That's a good idea, everybody'll have a birthday party!" So after the close of day we'd go in the library and then we'd go out and buy whatever was needed and surprise him. We got away from giving gifts. Then we had an annual Christmas party.

The thing that happened in the office you could always bring up at the end of the year party, the sort of thing that was funny and you wouldn't necessarily embarrass anybody, but they were stuck with the deal. If somebody goofed on a case--Charlie Wehr, for instance, always carried a pistol. He was handling homicide cases and felt he needed this for his protection. We had the identification pictures of each member of the deputy and investigative staff. We had the negatives of all the pictures. We had them enlarged. We had a skit cut out, in cardboard, and pasted on plywood, and you'd see Charlie Wehr's head up there on the cardboard cutout, and he'd be pulling the gun out to do some enemy in. Or somebody'd be picking a daisy or some screwball thing.

Anything that we could razz somebody on was a part of the fun of the party. We called this the Hall of Fame, and anybody could get their picture in the Hall of Fame. All they had to do was goof in some way or case they were working on, and they were put in the Hall of Fame.

Jahnsen: There was a lot of closeness. For instance, when my wife was so sick and she was in Merritt Hospital. She was out there for three months and under an oxygen tent for a month. It was really rough. She was at death's door. Mr. Warren would never let me come to the office. He says, "I don't want you down here. I want you to stay out there at the hospital. You're more needed out there than you're needed here."

I remember Lorraine Redicher, one of our stenographers, was sick and died. Mr. Warren would send an investigator out to her home every day to take her mother to the hospital so she could be with Lorraine and comfort her. They didn't have very much money; they were up against it. Mr. Warren saw that she got to the hospital.

We had a kitty where we would all chip in for flowers, etc. The kitty was prorated according to your ability to pay.

During Prohibition some of the fellows got pretty high, but Mr. Warren never said anything about it, but he certainly wasn't appreciative of it. We were out making raids and arresting bootleggers, and these things were happening. It was embarrassing to the office. Of course, when Prohibition was over, he'd buy you a drink.

No, he wasn't a prude. He wanted everybody to be a part of the office; he wanted the office to be a part of you. You had your love and your happiness in your work. If you had hell coming, you got it. But it was forgotten right afterwards. At an office meeting, he'd just lay out the policy to be followed.

King: Was anybody ever fired from the office?

Jahnsen: I think this was the hardest thing for Earl Warren to do. I think they quit. Nobody ever was fired.

I remember we had a fellow in the office named Bill. He was the clerk at the counter, and he would drink too much. He used to get drunk and he finally quit.

The office had a check-in time and a check-out time. When Mr. Warren became district attorney, the first thing he said was, "One thing we're getting rid of is the check-in and check-out time. You're on your own. Just make sure your work is done."

Jahnsen: Another thing he did, when Bill was at the counter he would never get home. Mrs. Ellison would call up and say, 'My husband is out doing some politics for you, and he's drunk or he's getting drunk in a bar trying to help you be re-elected.' So he'd call me up, and I'd have to make all the bars and go down and find Bill and take him home. Help put him to bed. Then his wife would tell me what a lousy, no good so-and-so Earl Warren was, that Bill only did this for him. That was Bill's story. Well this kept on and kept on until Bill finally had to quit. When Harry, one of our investigators, got drunk and ran the Ford car that was assigned to him, off the loading platform at Encinal Terminal, he came in and quit. Mr. Warren couldn't fire anybody. He sure as hell could send you to jail if you were dishonest! He'd turn the case over to the attorney general to prosecute you.

King: That's like that old joke about murder anytime, but never a divorce!

Jahnsen: That's right.

PARTY POLITICS IN THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

Earl Warren and the Republican Party

King: Well, let me just ask you a couple of questions about affiliations that you, maybe, and Mr. Warren had. Were you involved in any of these statewide associations like the Peace Officers? Were you part of those groups? Were you a member of those groups?

Jahnsen: Yes. I was a member of every one of them.

King: You were. What about Republican party?

Jahnsen: No, I was never a member of any of the political parties. I was a Republican, but I was never called upon, and neither was anybody else in the office. Mr. Warren said he was the Republican, and he ran the office. Frank Coakley, as I remember, was very active in the Al Smith fight.

King: Yes. That's right.

Jahnsen: Mr. Warren was very active in the [Herbert] Hoover [campaign.] Some people made a complaint about it or talked about it, and Mr. Warren says, "If Frank Coakley wants to be for Al Smith, that's Frank Coakley's business. And if you want to be for Al Smith, that's your business."

 No, Mr. Warren never interfered with your politics or your home. But better you take care of your home, better you be the right kind of fellow at home. He didn't want any scandals.

King: Well, I can understand that.

Jahnsen: No, he was a very fine father, and a very fine district attorney. And attorney general and governor.

King: When he went into the Republican state committee--do you get selected for that? Or does somebody stand up for you?

Jahnsen: Well, this is a matter of working your way up on the committee. You start out as a committeeman--

King: I see. But he was interested in the Republican party--

Jahnsen: Oh yes. Sure. He was state chairman and then become national committee chairman. In the attorney general's office, he had these [political] people that would come in, and he would devote a portion of his time, but these were outside people. Or he'd go to outside things. But never do I remember that he had any political meetings, except when he ran for office, and the same way with [Ralph] Hoyt and Coakley and them. Then everybody got in and worked for their own job, their own boss.

Political Campaigns

King: Were you involved in all those campaigns?

Jahnsen: Yes.

King: Did you go along on all those campaigns?

Jahnsen: Well, a lot of the campaigns I went along on. When he campaigned for Hoover, I didn't go along with him on the campaign trips.

King: That was in '38.

Jahnsen: But when he was running, I did. Anything that he did, I went along as an assistant in various ways, and had very little to do with formulating policy, unless there was something that directly came up to call his attention, and then he might ask you [for] a suggestion. Now I organized the security on the national campaign trains, and handled the security in general--that was mainly my job. To be with him, and associated with him, be in the same hotel, eat at the same table, drive the car, and ride with him in the car, and knew what was going on all the time. I would say I was a "close associate."

INSPECTOR IN THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

[Interview 3, July 17, 1970. Interviewers: Alice King and Miriam Stein]

More on the Shipboard Murder Case

Stein: I'd like to ask some more questions about the shipboard murder case. Did you know anything about the relationship between Charlie Wehr and Julia Vickerson, one of the jurors?

Jahnsen: I never had an occasion to look into it or investigate it. There was no reason--I wasn't asked to, but when the story was told, I was surprised.

Of course I understood from the story that Charlie Wehr had been an old friend of Mrs. Vickerson, had known her for many years. As I understood, he handled some legal matters for her. This I don't know for sure, other than what I was told. I was also told that, because of this friendship, she had given him several gifts. Among them was a horse and a horse trailer. Whether this was true, I don't know. I've never seen either the horse or the trailer.

The story was that Charlie Wehr, when Mrs. Vickerson was on the jury panel and was about to be selected it was reported that he knew her, and knew that he had done some work for her--had been her attorney or had been friendly--and then the horse story came out, and of course when she was questioned as to her knowledge of anyone in the district attorney's office--she knew anybody there-- Of course, again, all witnesses were excluded from the courtroom, and so this is only hearsay, but when they asked the question Mrs. Vickerson indicated or stated that she didn't know anybody, which, if true, was false. [Laughter]

Jahnsen: Consequently, had Mr. Warren known this, I'm sure--had he been aware of it--he would have informed the court immediately. Oh, he would never have allowed her to sit on the jury; this could never have happened.

Stein: How did this all become known afterwards?

Jahnsen: I really don't know, other than it became a story that there were some questions about people on the jury hadn't been truthful and that Mrs. Vickerson was a friend of Wehr's. Wehr never made any comments to me or anyone else that I know of, and as I say again, it was only hearsay on my part about their relationship or friendship.

King: He didn't know he was ill then, did he?

Jahnsen: No, I'm sure that he didn't know that he was ill, but it was very obvious. It appeared that from long hours and overwork that he was very tired. He gave that impression of being a man that was under great strain and effort. He doesn't have any zip, in other words. He was dragging his body around, so to speak.

It later developed, of course, that he had leukemia, and he died from leukemia. I think this was because of his tired feeling that he decided to go and have a check-up, and then it was found that he was suffering from leukemia. I think possibly, not in defense of Mr. Wehr, but in a way of me looking at it, and the way it appeared to me was that he wasn't as sharp a man as he normally had been in the past. He was tired, and I think he was fearful--if this was true--if anything like that did come out, that it would just take more strength than he was able to muster.

Of course again this is purely a surmise on my part; I can't say that he knew or didn't know, or this had any real effect. I imagine it would, if he knew it--if this was true.

Stein: Is Julia Vickerson still around, do you know? ?

Jahnsen: I don't know. I've never heard of her since that incident. She lived in Oakland, I understand. She had to live in the county to be on the jury.

Stein: Where was Mr. Vickerson during all this. ?

Jahnsen: That I don't know. I don't know anything about the Vickersons at all. [Laughter]

Stein: From what I understood they were a fairly prominent family. I guess they must have had some kind of money if she could be giving gifts like horses and horse trailers.

Jahnsen: Well, I suppose when you say "prominent," you could be prominent in the criminal world, and you could be prominent in the business world, or you could be prominent in many other ways. I don't think she was any prominent person. I think she was an ordinary person that was listed in the jury panel, and I don't think she had any great background. I don't think she was prominent in that way. In fact I think most of the people who ever heard about this would have to think back who she was. She never to my knowledge ever was written up in the papers or anything to give her any notoriety or any publicity.

It wasn't customary to investigate jury panels. The district attorney never went out and investigated a panel of jurors to find out if he wanted this one or that one. I would think it would be a good idea, but Warren wouldn't do this. Maybe if the story was true, maybe had we investigated every member of the jury, the whole panel--remember the venire was, oh, many, many people. It would have taken a terrific force of people to run that background down to find out who they were associated with, and everything.

I think in the federal grand jury system--I don't know this to be a fact--but it seems to me in the federal grand jury system when a person gets on the grand jury or is going to be selected for the grand jury, the Federal Bureau of Investigation normally checks into their background to make a determination of the loyalty and their integrity and their honesty and criminal records if any and so forth.

King: I think that's true. But that's only in the grand jury; I don't think that's in a regular jury.

Jahnsen: I don't think they do it with the ordinary federal jury, no.

King: And this was a regular criminal trial, wasn't it?

Stein: Yes.

King: I mean it wasn't a grand jury investigation.

Stein: There was a grand jury--there were grand jury indictments shortly after the murder. But Julia Vickerson was on the trial jury.

Jahnsen: Yes. We never-- I would put it this way: we never did any checking on any juries, grand jury or otherwise. To get on the grand jury you have to be recommended, your name has to be submitted to a judge, and then it's put in the box, and then you're selected. This is one thing.

However, I think most district attorneys, and most law enforcement people, try to keep somewhat of a line, you could say, or a record, on how people voted who were on juries. I think when you find that some juror voted against an open and shut case and they voted against it, you wonder why they voted against that. He wouldn't actually make a note that so-and-so was pro or con or whatever they were, you see. But I don't think there was any investigation.

Stein: Did Warren do that? He kept that kind of notation?

Jahnsen: Oh, I think this is customary in most district attorney's offices. I don't think there was a record kept, but I think-- well, a jury's on for three months, or whatever the length of time is, and you get pretty familiar with these jurors as to who they are and how they vote. I don't think it was put down in writing--maybe, you know. I don't say that. I don't mean that. But I think that most of the deputies in trying cases would say, "Look out for So-and-So; she'd vote against you," or "She's against the prosecution and she has a sympathetic heart for the defense," or something like that. But I don't think that any definite record was kept, even on grand jurors.

Of course you couldn't do much about removing a grand juror, because he's already been selected, you see. Of course they're only a fact-finding body that goes into various things to make a determination on whether or not an indictment should be returned. One of the reasons for using the grand juries, it always appeared to me, was that if you swear to a complaint against somebody, and charge him with a crime and then the person is not convicted or the case is dismissed, you're civilly liable for the damage you might have done to the individual's reputation. Whereas if the grand jury indicts

Jahnsen: you, this is something entirely different, see? This frees the individual from any civil liability.

King: I didn't know that.

Jahnsen: Of course that testimony is confidential, too. When the person goes and testifies-- I think they're trying awfully hard, some of these defense lawyers, and I would say [of] interest to the civil rights people, as they call themselves, pretty much left-wing--are very anxious to have all of the facts to the grand jury presented. They would like to be able to appear before the grand jury, so they could get the testimony of the prosecution put on before it.

Another thing, too. You normally would limit the scope of the facts before a grand jury, because when the transcript comes out, this is available to the defense. So I think that it's a very slim case. The same way in a preliminary hearing--you don't bring your whole case out.

Stein: That explains it.

Jahnsen: Explains what?

Stein: Well, I've read in a couple of different cases that the grand jury reports-- Well, on the bail bond scandal, the grand jury report is very, very brief, and doesn't go into things very extensively at all.

Jahnsen: Well, you see, the purpose of this is, they just put on enough evidence, or enough facts before--

King: To get an indictment.

Jahnsen: Yes. The same way in the preliminary hearing, so that they would hold the individual to answer, or the indictment would be returned. Well, then you'd be playing your whole case, you see? The defense would know all the witnesses and goodness only knows the pressure that might be put on them. Oh, there'd be a lot of-- It wouldn't be fair.

Stein: Getting back to the shipboard murder case, do you remember a fellow named Frank Corrigan?

Jahnsen: Why, you're thinking--

Stein: He was one of the ship's crew, and he claimed to have witnessed the murder. He said that he went to the district attorney's office and told his story, and he was put on the stand, but only very briefly.

Jahnsen: You don't mean Frank Conner, do you?

Stein: No. No, this Corrigan wasn't one of the defendants.

Jahnsen: Well, there was a Corrigan in the case, but I don't remember him ever coming to the district attorney's-- Not saying that he didn't. But I don't remember him coming. There was an individual that came and gave some information, saying that-- I may be a little far-fetched here and there here--came and said that a fellow by the name of Corrigan was on a ship that was on its way to New York, or to Baltimore, and he knew all about the murder. Maybe I'm in error here, it might have been a fellow named Corrigan that gave the name of a fellow who was on a ship, you see?

It seems to me--of course this is going quite a way back now--this Leonard Meltzer and one of our inspectors--I think it was Lloyd Jester--flew back--maybe it was two inspectors--it might have been George Hard, too--Baltimore. They boarded the ship and interviewed a man there but there was no relation. There was no foundation to what this story was.

Stein: Nothing came of that?

Jahnsen: No. You see, there was a lot of information that came in. You find a lot of people that know a lot of things about nothing. They come in with a lot of information so they can be in on the thing.

Stein: Yes, and have their name in the papers.

Jahnsen: Yes, that too. Then, when a reward is offered, they're very anxious to share in the reward, so if anything should develop they can say, "I had a part in it," you see?

But Frank Corrigan-- Now of course Frank Conner was one of the people that was an engineer on the ship, and he knew about the murder, see? So there would be no question in Frank Conner's case. That the reason I asked you if it was Frank Conner, see? He had a grudge against Alberts and he was the

Jahnsen: one that suggested to King, secretary of the Marine Firemen's Union, and some of those people, that they send Ramsay over, and the others, to get Sakovitz and them to come over and give Alberts a bad time.

Stein: Right. The murder is committed in March, and the trial takes place in November. I was curious as to why there was that time lapse.

Jahnsen: Well, this was a fact. These things drag out. Gee, you're just reading now where fellows are being tried on cases that-- Well, look at the [Charles] Manson case down there, and look at a lot of these other cases. The only thing about this here, the wheels of justice move very slowly and they grind very fine, they say, see? This doesn't necessarily mean that there was any purpose in the delay. There were unavoidable delays.

Here was a man that was killed aboard a ship, and all of a sudden this thing blows up, and who killed him? How did they kill him or why did they kill him? Well, you just don't turn on a light and get the light that fast. [Laughter] So it means you have to do a lot of interviewing and a lot of interrogating and a lot of investigating, and you have to run out, as I said a minute ago, a lot of people know a lot about nothing and they're willing to tell you a lot of things that don't mean anything. This means that you've got to run out all those leads.

Now, it was some time before we was able to get some real information. We had run out a lot of leads. We even stopped down at San Pedro, and had people go down there and board a ship down there to interview people, see? I think this was the ship that later went around East. They missed somebody and decided to go East to get it, you see? Well, by the time that ship got around to the East coast through the Panama Canal, this could take two or three weeks, and before you know it, a month goes by or two months.

Then once we did get some information, it was a question of verifying the information. Then it was a question of court, preliminary hearings, grand juries, and so forth. Then it meant handling the evidence, and keeping witness, locating witnesses. People are going to sea on ships and you had to get them off ships and bring them back and hold them. So time does go. In the meantime, there's a lot of other things going on, and I think during this--this was 1935, wasn't it?

Stein: 1936.

Jahnsen: Thirty-six. Well, I think there in that same period of time we had the grand jury going for three months. We were investigating the Alameda County graft scandal, as I remember it, and we were investigating--maybe I'm a little off with this, but in Alameda itself the B. Ray Fitts case over there, where we sent the--

King: That's the city manager--

Jahnsen: --city manager to the penitentiary. Then we had the board of equalization case going on--it was graft. We have eight investigators working night and day, with no sleep.

King: Were you involved with the board of equalization case?

Jahnsen: Yes.

King: Is that the big case in the state of California? I'm confused about the board of equalization. Is that when they have the liquor license--

Jahnsen: Yes, the state board of equalization liquor license.

King: I see. Did it break in Alameda County?

Jahnsen: Well, yes.

King: I didn't know that.

Jahnsen: Yes. That's another story entirely. I'll just have to think on this one first. [Laughter] And then to get over there, because you've got this on the record.

Stein: Well, when did Matthew Guidera pop into the story?

Jahnsen: Matthew Guidera was a steward aboard a ship, and he belonged to the Marine Cooks and Stewards Union, see? The Marine Cooks and Stewards Union and the Sailors Union and the Marine Firemen's Union and Masters, Mates and Pilots, and all these people, they didn't all work so closely together, not in those days. There was feeling between the Marine Cooks and the Firemen, see? And other unions, and particularly in a thing like this.

Jahnsen: We heard about Guidera--information was given to us about him--and he more or less came in because of this reward. I would say because of the reward. I don't think he came in because he wanted to uncover a murder. I don't think he was friendly with the Marine Firemen, although he knew a lot of them in the Marine Firemen. In fact he later became a roommate of a fellow named Albert Murphy, who was King's secretary--assistant, rather, you see? And this was how we worked the deal out on Murphy, you see, was through Guidera. This was a set-up on him to get the facts and that worked out.

Stein: Yes, I heard that story of running the wire under the carpet and out the door.

Jahnsen: Oh, yes. A lot of people never knew this, you see. This was the first time this story's come out. [Laughter] Well this was quite a deal. I never sweat so much in my life. I would have lost twenty pounds, and I guess if I could do it again I wouldn't have to go on a diet.

Stein: That's a wonderful story--you trying to work your way down the hall with the elevator going up and down and running the risk of people seeing you on your hands and knees, crawling down the hall! [Laughter]

Jahnsen: I often wondered if one of those fellows should open the door and say, "What the hell are you doing here," see?

That button hook come in very handy, I'm telling you, after I found out what I was up against. Of course this was green carpet--you get an idea from this carpet--and you see this brown wire strung across, and then having George Henningsen, one of our inspectors, turning around after I had the thing all set and trip over the wire and break the wire and then had to pull the whole thing out and get out of there, because he [Murphy] was going to be home any minute, you see. [Laughter] Coming back to his room. This would have been bad.

Standards in Investigating

King: I have a question about that whole bit in that room, which is that you said you went down to San Leandro to find out something about wiretapping equipment. I wondered whether you do this kind of thing because it's policy in the office, or because Warren has said, "We have to do this sort of thing," or do you do this kind of on your own as part of your job as an investigator?

Jahnsen: Oh, you can't-- You have to be familiar with the law. You have to be familiar with what's legal and what can be presented as evidence. In those days, evidence was legal and could be presented in the court no matter how you obtained it. Not in the federal court system.

To give an illustration: If I was going to prosecute or handle a case in the federal court, and I wanted to bring that case in the federal court as a state office, see, I was not bound by the federal rule. Except when they could show collusion. If a federal officer told me about an incident, and he couldn't get a warrant for it because he didn't have sufficient grounds, which is commonly known as "probable cause," to get the warrant, he could tell me about it. I would go in and burglarize the room and get the evidence and turn it over to him. Now this would be collusion, see?

But if I on my own knew about this thing, and there was a federal violation, a state violation, or whatever you want to call it, and I got the evidence, I could take it over to the United States's attorney's office and sign a complaint and they would take that evidence and they would present it. Of course the federal government received it legally, but I obtained it in an illegal fashion. That's what they would say today, see? Now the rule is today that you can't do that.

The same way under the Federal Communications Act. There was no effective rule as far as the Federal Communications Act was concerned about wiretapping. They later developed that the Federal Communications Act became more stringent, and you had to get an authority from the attorney general to do these things--the federal people. The state people could still do some of this. But the minute [pounding for emphasis] that

- Jahnsen: became recognized as a state law, we tore it out. I had done this at one time, on a particular case, and Earl Warren was very much disturbed, because just at the psychological time this happened he could have been embarrassed as attorney general.
- Stein: What was this?
- Jahnsen: In a case we worked on. If it were found out that I was wire-tapping.
- Stein: Well let me ask you this question: Katcher said in this book, or maybe it's Bob Powers that says it, that when he wanted to catch the murderer in the Methias Warren case that he asked you to ask Warren if they could bug a cell at San Quentin, where somebody was being held whom they felt would know something about it. You said to Powers, "Warren doesn't like to use a dictaphone."*
- Jahnsen: A dictaphone?
- King: Yes. He said, "Well ask him anyway--after all it was his father." So you apparently asked him anyway, and you came back and you said, "Warren doesn't want to use a dictaphone."
- Jahnsen: There's so many of these things that happened over the years. I knew Warren's thinking, see? So I wouldn't have had to go in and ask Warren in that case at all.
- King: I understand. That's very clear in the story.
- Jahnsen: I wouldn't have had to go in and ask Warren in that, because at the time Methias Warren was murdered I was pretty much convinced in my own mind who committed the murder. I'm very well satisfied.
- King: I'd like to hear about that.
- Jahnsen: However, I never could convince Earl Warren of that. Earl Warren is a very positive thinker, and a very clear thinker,

*See Robert B. Powers, Law Enforcement, Race Relations: 1930-1960, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1971, pp. 19-20.

Jahnsen: and sometimes you can't present the facts, or paint the picture--if you want to put it that way--of what you see to the other fellow clearly enough, because he's looking at it from the legal point of view, see.

Now, you're finding that the [U.S.] Supreme Court today [is] doing certain things, or making certain decisions, you see, in favor of the Constitution, they say, or the Bill of Rights. Well, they're looking at this from an entirely different point of view. They're looking at one issue, one thing, about this. Now, Warren is that kind of a man. He's looking at it legally, see? Now, honestly, he just don't violate the law to enforce the law, if you know what I mean.

King: Absolutely.

Jahnsen: Now I wouldn't say that I went to Earl Warren and asked him if it was all right to put in a dictaphone, because Earl Warren wouldn't have anything to do with that. As a matter of fact, if he wanted--if he would say, "Okay," he wouldn't want to know about it.

King: All right. Maybe this isn't very clear. Maybe my question is why does somebody think it's not okay to use a dictaphone in San Quentin to try to find Methias Warren's murderer, and it's okay to tap the room in the King, Conner, Ramsay case? Or is it the difference between dictaphone and wiretap that I don't understand?

Jahnsen: No. You could say it's eavesdropping, if you want to put it that way. No, this is an entirely different line of thinking. First of all, to put a microphone in a prison--at San Quentin prison--how would you get it in there? [Laughter] This to me would be-- Now, maybe Bob Powers may have said that to one of the other people, see? He may have asked one of the attorneys on it. He may have asked Harry Miller, or he may have asked some of the other people--

Stein: There weren't special cells that were set up with microphones?

Jahnsen: Oh, no. We didn't-- These people are sharp, and there's no way--

A microphone, you had to get a wire out. You got a wire recorder here, see? Now we got that [the recorder] outside,

Jahnsen: and you got this [the microphone] inside. How are you going to get that in here, with all these criminals around you? Huh? Who do you trust in San Quentin? The institution might say, or the personnel might say, or the warden, or associate warden, or any of these people handling custody in a prison might say, "Well, it's fine. You go ahead and do it." How are you going to get in and do it? How are you going to transfer this fellow from one cell to another? How are you going to isolate him? He's got nobody to talk to. How are you going to put anybody in the cell with him?

It used to be common practice years ago that when you were in a county jail and you had reason to believe the prisoner in there had information--

King: You put a stool pigeon in.

Jahnsen: Sure. You'd put somebody in with him. You'd get some guy, and he was supposed to be arrested for drunk, and he beat somebody up, and so he got sentenced to the county jail. Well the guy in the--commonly called "the joint"--in the place, don't know how this man-- Somebody gets in, and the fellow won't talk. That is, the new man, the undercover man, won't talk.

The other fellow is dying to talk. He says, "What the hell are you in for?" Something like that, see? "Don't bother me!" See? He'd right away use a lot of psychology on the fellow, then finally he gave him a long line of nothing, see?

This cell is miked then, see? Of course this is being recorded. Don't you think these criminal lawyers tell these clients, "Don't talk"? [Laughter] They're not going to do this in the county jail, and you don't get anyplace with this. It would be-- Well, I was going to say it would be like putting a man on the moon, but that's not impossible! [Laughter]

Stein: No, you can't use that expression anymore!

Jahnsen: But this don't work, you see. I don't remember Bob Powers ever telling me that. I won't say he didn't make some suggestion, but what I would have said, right off the bat--

King: You did, absolutely.

Jahnsen: --that Earl Warren wouldn't do this. Because Earl Warren, particularly--

King: I'll xerox the page and send it to you.

Jahnsen: Oh, no. You don't have to do that. Earl Warren actually-- particularly when his father--this is the peculiar thing about Earl Warren, you know.

We took an airplane. It took a couple of county cars; it took the time of secretaries or stenographers and investigators in the sheriff's office, and in our office; it took others in there--Frank Letullipe of the criminal division of the San Francisco police department, Dr. Hamlin; it took a lot of effort that went down there.

After it was all said and done, and the whole thing came to quite a bill--this cost the county a lot of money-- Earl Warren paid the county out of his own pocket for that investigation, because he didn't want it said he sent these people out of the county and charged the people because his father was murdered. You never heard that story before, did you?

Stein: No.

Jahnsen: He paid that himself. Yes, some \$14 or \$15,000. He turned that money over to Alameda County for the salaries and the effort and everything else.

Stein: Of all those investigators--

Jahnsen: So you think Earl Warren's going to violate the law, then, when he didn't feel it was just to do this? He was not going to let me tap any lines and violate any law to find the murderer of his father and then have it develop that the thing was a frame-up or some other thing like the ship murder frame-up, and all that stuff. Now this isn't true.

Now I don't say that Bob Powers didn't do that. Now I know Bob Powers and like him very well and have a lot of regard for Bob, and he was a good chief of police and very dedicated to his work. A very, you might say, determined type of an individual. He was very anxious to find the murderer. The men in his department all worked hard on this case.

Jahnsen: I don't like to say that I supervised the investigation in his county, but I certainly had a lot to do with it. [Laughter] Sending the men out, and handling the men and the evidence, and so forth. So I certainly wasn't going to have anything accumulated. When they took a man over and started giving him the third degree I broke it up. I wasn't going to have this, because then it would happen that we third-degreed a man and got a confession from him. We don't do that. Earl Warren would no more permit a man to be third-degreed, or licked or beaten or anything else.

This never was in his life. He is an honest, kind, fine man. Not only that, on top of it, the man had a strong belief in a Supreme Being. He's a very honorable man. He'd rather lose the case-- Many a time he told me when we had a weak case, "Drop it; let's not fool with it. If the man's violating the law, he'll violate it again. That'll be all right--we'll catch him then, violating it." But he also said, "If he doesn't violate it again, maybe the experience helped him!" [Laughter]

Stein: I remember Willard Shea, the public defender, told me any number of stories where he dropped the charges against people because--

Jahnsen: Willard Shea come to him many a time and said to him, "These are the facts." And he'd say, "Willard, are you satisfied those are the facts? Well, all right, drop the investigation, drop the case." That's true.

The Methias Warren Murder Case

Stein: Did you want to ask about the Methias Warren case?

King: Yes, I do, but I want to ask you one more question before we turn over to that. The last time I was here you said, "Did I ever tell you the story about Reagan and the arrest in the killing of Methias Warren?" Are you talking about the governor now? Is that the Reagan you meant?

Jahnsen: Oh no. Regan was an associate of Matt Warren--Earl Warren's father. Regan was a man that had Earl Warren's father's confidence. He believed that Regan was a very fine man. Now we get into an entirely different area now, here. Old Man Warren had these houses that he'd acquired over a long period

Jahnsen: of time, little places. They didn't amount to too much, but they were an income. Regan was helping him around with a lot of these things, see? Looking after some of the property. Matt Warren had confidence in Regan, see?

King: Was he sort of a handyman, fixed up the properties and things like that?

Jahnsen: Well, in a sense. He worked closely with him.

King: They were really just two old guys.

Jahnsen: Warren would have loan him money!

I always felt that what happened was that Matt Warren, although we never could find it, and Harry Miller was--boy, he was a methodical fellow about turning over every leaf and looking for every mite, you might say. He never did find out where Matt Warren ever loaned Regan any money, see?

Now Regan had relatives that were in the penitentiary--that doesn't mean he was a criminal--but there was people in the penitentiary, I'm satisfied. One of them I interviewed at Salem Prison was related to Regan and I have to go back and get my notes to look up that fellow's name. However, Collie Stoores and another fellow, the detective up there, sent down to us and said that this man could tell us--I told you that story, didn't I?

King: No.

Jahnsen: --could tell us who killed Warren's father, if we'd come up and see him. So I went up there to Salem, to the Portland police department and rode down with Stoores and another fellow. These two detectives had done a lot of work--particularly athletic-type work, like boxing and everything--and they had an interest in the state prison up there in trying to help people. Even though they were in the law-enforcement business, they would go down there and put on fights and one thing and another for the inmates, and, you know, try to help them out in their physical program.

This man had told them who they thought had killed Earl Warren's father. They told me that they were satisfied we could get the information, that they'd tell me who killed him.

Jahnsen: I said, "Well fine. I'm the fellow to talk to. I'll be glad to go down." I went down with them and then they took us in and put us in a cell by ourselves. I had the two detectives from the Portland police department sit there with me, Stoope and I can't think of the other fellow's name.

This fellow wanted me to make him a proposition--a guarantee--that he would be given certain considerations by the superior court of Alameda County. Well I couldn't guarantee him anything. I had no guarantees to pass out.

Stein: Yes. Special dispensations.

Jahnsen: And this man had been convicted of a crime in Alameda County, and he was on probation, on parole or probation, I suppose it was, in that case. There's two cases similar, but one was not connected with the Warren case. This fellow had violated his probation when he got in Oregon and got arrested for another felony, and he went to the penitentiary. But he knew in violating that probation that he had to come back and face the case in Alameda County, and by doing that he would then be automatically sent to San Quentin prison. This would be it. There wasn't any--unless you could get the judge to allow him to continue his probation because of what he did and what favors he showed, see, and he would be on parole from Oregon and on probation from Alameda County, or the state of California. If this could be worked out.

Well, I said, "Gee, fella, I want to be very frank with you that I have no way of guaranting you anything, but I'll be very happy to present the facts that you give me, and it's up to the court. I'm sure it would be presented to the court. If the judge sees fit, this is fine." He said he had definite information who murdered Matt Warren.

So I said, "Well, where did you get this information?" Well a very dear friend of his, a girl friend or some woman friend, had this information and he would have to get her to come down to the prison and they'd have to tell us the story. But first, before he would tell us anything, he would have to get that guarantee, because there was no use in telling the story, if he wasn't going to be allowed to walk out.

Well, this right away began to sound kind of fishy to me. So I checked up on this fellow. As I remember it now, he was Regan's cousin. Of course, that gives rise to a lot of

Jahnsen: surmise. It makes you wonder. Was he in the vicinity at the time? Did Regan hire him or somebody else in the family to commit the murder? Or did Regan commit the murder? And did Regan know about all this, see? You wouldn't know. But I had reason to believe at the time on the evidence that we had that Regan was very much involved in that murder, whether he committed it or not. So, when you ask about the facts-- what was your main question, there, I've forgotten now?

King: Just about who Regan was.

Jahnsen: Well, this is the Regan. You asked if it was any relation to Governor [Ronald] Reagan--no. In fact that's Reagan, this was Regan, I think.

King: Whatever became of him?

Jahnsen: He died of cancer of the throat.

King: I see. But nobody could ever get any sort of evidence that was significant enough to get an indictment out of him?

Jahnsen: No. I think one time we almost had him. I think one time he was almost to the point of telling. And would have if it hadn't of been for these guys getting so hot. Now I, you know--

King: Now what do you mean, "these guys getting so hot"? Who got hot?

Jahnsen: Well, I helped arrange the funeral and was there at the funeral with the family and the group.

Prior to this there were some things that looked very suspicious, you see? To go back on this, we knew that Matt Warren had certain valuable papers and things, and we knew that he carried them in a certain way. He carried a lot of these papers in his pockets. He had two imitation leather wallets-- they were a little bigger than a standard large envelope. He carried notes and documents and papers and a lot of things. He had his vests made extra large for the two pockets in his vest.

When he was killed, he was hit with an iron pipe about so big, alongside of the head. He was sitting there and I think the person that hit him knew that Warren would know who

Jahnsen: it was--would recognize him, see? And I think the idea was to make sure that he was dead--make sure. Because what happened was: if this was the kitchen stove, like this [drawing], there was an electric light cord hung down, and he had one of these screw-in where you can put a gang--about five or six lights in it?

Stein: Yes. A multiple socket.

Jahnsen: A multiple plug in the top, yes--a multiple light. And he used to sit there in the chair and he put his feet up on the stove. It was a little gas stove with an oven like this, and he'd sit there. His habit was before he went to bed was to read and to look over things. He didn't come up here with his wife--she was having some eye operations with Dr. Stevenson in Alameda. She was living with her daughter, Ethel. He didn't come up, because he had people coming in every hour of the day and night.

People couldn't pay their rent, money was tight in the Depression; somebody'd come in and give him fifty cents or a dollar. He'd make out a little receipt for them, and he'd take the money and put it in a little glass jar, like a little mayonnaise jar, and put it in the little sideboard cabinet there, you see?

He'd stay up until ten, eleven o'clock at night. And during this time he'd either have a bowl of cereal or shredded wheat and milk, or he'd go across to a little restaurant on the corner--it was an ice cream soda stand, you know--milk shake stand. He'd go over there and he'd have a milk shake and go home.

On this occasion he was sitting there and when he did, the way the evidence works out, against the stove was a wall. There was a door going into the--and the filing cabinets along here. The door was behind him, so he couldn't be looking back who came in. But the front door was open and the back door was open; anybody could come in. So whoever knew his habits, they came in the back door. And when they came in they picked up some rusty pipe in the yard, a piece about so big, and about this wide, and this they threw away, over in the yard next door when they left the place.

Jahnsen: They had a little imitation well--you've seen those little--and it lit on the top of that well. There was hair there, and blood on it, but because of the rust you couldn't get any fingerprints, or anything, or samples of blood and so forth, but it was pretty rusty, you see, deteriorated a good deal. They threw that over the fence.

They had to come in the back door. When they did, Matt Warren apparently got up this way [demonstrating] and looked, and this individual--whoever came in, and believe me, now, this is all figured out and determined and measured, and so forth, to get the picture by Frank Letullipe, the criminologist, and some of the rest of us, to make a determination what happened. They came in, and when they did, they went over and they must have held this up to Warren. Now, he was standing this way, facing them. He naturally would throw up his hands, wouldn't he? His whole hand was all bruised across the back. So he must have hit him on the hand, first. Now if you get a hard bang on the hand, what's the natural reaction, if you're standing and you get that. You'd hold your hand, wouldn't you?

Stein: Right. Your hand goes down.

Jahnsen: That would actually put him this way. The fellow laid this thing across his head and fractured his skull, and depressed about this much [demonstrating] of the skull into his head. He bled profusely. The chair that he was standing by, he fell into this great big old leather chair, and the chair was full of blood, see?

This fellow must have come back later, because Matt Warren got up, and handmarks in blood, his handprints, went against the wall, against the door, against the filing cabinet, and into where the bed was. Now Matt Warren, from what happened to him, according to Dr. Hamlin and the other specialists on it, couldn't have covered himself up. I could see this very clearly. He couldn't have gotten into bed and covered himself up.

When we got there nobody had touched the body. We asked Powers--on the phone I did--not to disturb anything, see? Because I knew we were getting Frank Letullipe, an outstanding criminologist, and I knew Bakersfield didn't have anybody with that background, you see, to go over everything and have a tremendous amount of experience. The covers were up over his head--up over like this, see--way up to his neck. Now how could

Jahnsen: you ever lay in bed and try to cover yourself and put your arms down? You can't get them up can you see? And another thing--

King: It sounds like remorse, doesn't it?

Jahnsen: Yes. His watch chain was laying out straight and the watch was laying on the bed. So he must have been dead when he was put in bed, because if you're hit like this you're going to roll, aren't you? You're going to toss--that watch chain couldn't be straight out there, could it? It would gradually work into the body, wouldn't it? You see what I mean? So all these things tell you something.

Stein: Did it look as though the person had tried to steal the watch and just left it?

Jahnsen: No, no, no. They didn't want that. They didn't take the money in the little jar, either. If it had been robbery they would have got that. They didn't take any of his jewelry or anything.

This was laid out there, so somebody had to come back. The heel prints that went in the blood as they walked--there was a lot of blood--were very distinct, and the heel marks were identical with Matt Warren's shoes. So we knew he had to walk. Nobody helped him, because his hand-- There'd have been other footprints in the blood, see, and there was only one there.

But how did he get into bed? So whoever did it had to come back. Now who would want to come back, or who would ever figure going back after this happened? They'd want to get out and be on their way, wouldn't they? If it was some bum or some drunk, or some criminal--I mean some robber or burglar or something like this coming in to rob, or to steal--they didn't take anything, but the two papers that were in his wallet. One wallet was found on the floor with nothing disturbed, but the wallet that had the papers of value in it, that was there with no papers.

Stein: Somebody really had to know him.

King: What were the papers of value? Were they deeds to these houses?

Jahnsen: Oh, yes, papers that he-- You'd consider he'd keep notes and memorandums in one and he would keep anything of value in the

Jahnsen: other--to him, to Matt Warren, of value. Whoever went there went there with the idea of getting something that they were looking for, that they felt was very important to them.

Now, when you go out the side of the house and you go down a half a block to the corner and you walk across the street, and you go down past the high school, where the little old ball park is there, and then you go down another block or so and there's an alley and you go down the alley, and then you come about two blocks down and there's a lot and on the corner of that lot is Regan's house. I sent these fellows out to search the neighborhood, because it was very windy.

The track led--all of the papers were found--it's across the street, down in the ballpark, some little kid found a five dollar bill. This is more evidence to the fact that the papers in this wallet were of value. Now we don't know how much money he had, but this one fiver was found; the wind had blown it. They brought it in and showed us where they found it. You went down a little bit further and here were some more papers found where the wind had blown them under brushes, but of no value--they'd been opened. As you got down, just across catty-corner from Regan's house--here was a bunch of papers found where they'd been burnt. A fire'd been started.

Stein: Well, that's certainly very suspicious.

Jahnsen: So we had some reason to believe that possibly somebody [laughter] either was framing Regan, and that would be a pretty far-fetched way to frame him, because who would ever think of going--

I had different inspectors and Bakersfield police, I had them come in and report. We had a meeting every morning. I'd say, "Well, okay." Then they'd say, "Well we found everything," the two of them that went out. I'd say, "Well--" and we'd get a couple of more bird dogs and we'd put them on. I'd take two different men, and I'd say, "Well there's more papers missing." I didn't know whether there were or not. [Laughter] "But there's more," I said. "You go down here, and you search that." They went down and then I sent the third group out until they found the last point.

Now did the policemen plant the papers across from Regan's lot--the investigators--and light a match to them? They didn't

Jahnsen: have any papers. Well who took them down there, who put them there? Somebody framing Regan?

Now, during the funeral I was sitting there and Regan came down there. There was Earl Warren, his mother, Nina Warren and the children, and they were sitting there and I was sitting just in back of them. I saw Regan come down, and he walked up, and he got I would say from about where I'm standing we'll say in here is the area by which the mourners were sitting, see? With a crepe de chine curtain. When he got down where I could see him coming down the aisle, it was like a funeral parlor, you know, set up with chairs, and he looked up and he looked over and he says, [eerie tone] "Awhh--My God! My friend. Awhh, ohhh--" [demonstrating] But he was very careful when he fell down, "Oh, oh--my friend, my friend, oh--" see? But he was very careful as though he had a pillow down there so he wouldn't hurt himself. [Laughter]

Well I would have like to have got up and given him a hell of a good kick, because this was a play! Now whether he did this to impress the Warren family so he could take over and operate the businesses and look after Matt Warren's properties and so forth, which he wanted to do, or whether he was trying to absolve himself of any thing to do with committing the murder or being associated with anything about it, he would have to tell you that. I know what I thought.

After the funeral was over, I went over to the police department and I got the fingerprint man. I don't remember whether Bob Powers was there or not, but I said, "I want to talk to Regan." I went over with the idea of talking to him because of what happened. I was convinced that there was something phony about this. He'd been talked to before, been interviewed by others before.

When we got over there, he's sitting in the lawn swing, with his wife and some of the kids outside. He told me they didn't have anything when I'd interviewed him the first time. Matt Warren was his best friend--he was a father to him. Had done many things for him, but he was suffering financially in many other ways. If it hadn't have been for Matt Warren he wouldn't know what to do. He was very devoted to Matt Warren. "I was even more his son than Earl Warren was," he said. Well, that would be pretty hard to be, but anyway that's what he said. Well, this was a carry-over--what he did--of what

Jahnsen: he told me. Now he knew the Warren family was there, and the undertaking parlor had quite a few people in it. It shook up the family terrible, and it was a terrible thing.

When I got this identification man to go with me, I told him that when we got down there that I wanted to talk to him. I said, "We're trying to get some leads on how this murder occurred, and trying to eliminate people that had been there, so if we find any fingerprints that are strange to us, then by the process of elimination we would know whose fingerprints they were," which is true, "and we could identify those. Those that we couldn't identify would be somebody we'd be looking for, as a good suspect," you see?

Stein: A good way to get his fingerprints.

Jahnsen: That wouldn't make any difference, see? He would give you the fingerprints, I'm sure, anyway. There wasn't anything by which the fingerprints, as far as he knew, would help us or hurt him, in any way. The purpose of this was to interview him, and to get more out of him and talk to him more, see? And then talk to him about his situation and what happened.

He said he'd been to the doctor and that he'd had a slight heart attack, and that's what caused this. But yet again he was sitting in the lawn swing out there, with a cover on it, and his wife was sitting there. They had a couple of automobiles, and his kids were riding bicycles, and the house was a nice-looking house, so I don't see how poor the guy could have been. He was in first-class shape financially as [far] as I could see, and I could interpret. The house looked pretty well furnished.

I said to him--I can't think of his first name right now--"We wanted to take your fingerprints for the purposes of eliminating them, so we can find out who might have done this." "Oh! Well--" His wife said [very crisp], "Well, that isn't necessary, is it?" I said, "Well, I don't know how we're going to-- [Laughter] We got fingerprints in there, we don't know who they belong to. We can't tell, we get all mixed up. We have to know whose fingerprints they are--whether they're Matt Warren's fingerprints, or his wife's, or whoever else they are, we want to get all the fingerprints we can, and when we find some that we can't identify, then maybe we can find some individual that had something to do with this case."

Jahnsen: They were against it. He said, "All right. I will give them to you." They said okay after quite a bit of discussion. I'm coming around to the point you want to know about what happened. While we're talking, he got very nervous. He just turned white, like sick to his stomach. He was perspiring a lot. If he knew anything about fingerprinting, had any idea of it, which he must have had, he wouldn't have acted the way he did. We felt, he thought we suspected him of the crime. He had to go to the bathroom, and he went in and he washed his hands very thoroughly. We believed he wanted to wash the perspiration off.

Now, to digress here a minute, there's some people that don't print. Did you know that?

King: Yes.

Jahnsen: That don't leave fingerprints. They're called non-printers. They don't perspire. Fingerprints normally would leave a perspiration mark. Unless you actually printed it--unless it was in dust or some place that would actually leave a print--they wouldn't print. If he washed his hands very thoroughly and dried them very thoroughly, there wouldn't be any prints. This struck me as rather odd. When he was going to take the paper to handle the fingerprints, he did it more in this fashion [demonstrates, barely touching paper.] He didn't want to get his fingerprints on the paper, it appeared to me, and to the fingerprint man. Finally we got the prints.

Then I begin questioning him, and in the questioning this time I could see that he was pretty much disturbed. I thought by careful handling, without any promises, without and, you might say, coercion or any force, or anything at all, by kind treatment, and by talking to the man, he would say something that would come out that would be very factual and very indicative of the fact that he did or he didn't know something about the murder--I mean, who committed the murder.

Just about this time, the doorbell rang. In came two deputy sheriffs from the Los Angeles sheriff's office, and in come Henningsen, from our office, and in come, I think, Jimmy Ritchie, who was in our sheriff's office. They come in and they wanted to take him out and interrogate him. In other words, in those days we used to arrest a person for investigation, see, for the purpose of interrogation, which was legal. So I talked to him for a moment, but I could see

Jahnsen: that this was causing Regan some pain--not physical pain, but mental disturbance.

King: Excuse me just a minute. Now who has the authority in a situation like this? You've got Los Angeles deputy sheriffs, and you've got Jim Ritchie from Alameda County, and you from the DA's office. Who's the boss in a situation like that?

Jahnsen: Well I was the boss of it. I was there, but they didn't come over at my solicitation; they come over after having a conference and having talked with Regan to believe that Regan was the man that committed the murder, from the effects of the papers and everything that had gone, he was the prime suspect. They felt that was the thing to do, go and get him and talk to him. They figured that he would talk. He would have talked, I'm sure, had he committed that murder. He would have confessed it. I said earlier I'm satisfied we would have had the confession of what had happened if it hadn't of been for this interruption, see?

It was getting around dinner time, and I said to the fellows, "Well, why do you want to interview him now? Let's go and eat, and come back." We all went over to the El Cajon Hotel and sat down and talked about the thing. I didn't want to discuss in front of Regan what I thought, and what my feelings were, and the fingerprint man didn't want to be involved in any of this. We didn't want him involved in it. All he was there to do was to take the fingerprints anyway, but yet again he could be a witness as to what transpired, and I didn't want to get involved in any conversation in front of the Regans at this time.

We got over there, and it was agreed that after dinner we would again talk to Regan. This was fine. We went down to the corner and had some dinner. I forget just what transpired in the meantime, but when I came back they were going to get ahold of Regan and start in on him. They took him up to the El Cajon Hotel and in a room.

King: Now were these the L.A. sheriff's deputies who did this, or was it all these guys?

Jahnsen: Well, it was Henningsen, and it was Ritchie, and the other people. None of the Bakersfield people were there, to my knowledge. But these people were working at it. Powers wasn't too happy with the Los Angeles men, as I remember. He felt that

Jahnsen: they were running away with the show maybe--

King: I've gotten the impression that Powers just wasn't too happy!

Jahnsen: Well, no-- I don't blame him, in a way. A bunch of strangers come in there, law enforcement people, and want to run an investigation, and so forth. Bob was very considerate of a lot of the things that happened. I think it would be disturbing to any chief of police.

King: I'm sure that's true, yes.

Jahnsen: Yes. In fact, when we arrived there, I phoned the police department. Dr. Hamlin and the rest of us in the plane had a very rough plane ride; we thought we were going to drop any minute in the thing. When we got there from the airport we phoned to tell the police department and tell Powers we were there. I had never met Bob Powers before, and suggested that we would meet him over at the Bakersfield address, because this was more en route from the airport than the police department, and time was getting on. Dr. Hamlin wanted to get on with the autopsy, and one thing and another.

After we were over there a little while, there was a fellow stirring around in the backyard, and I went over and asked the fellow a question.

I said, "My name is Jahnsen. I'm from the district attorney's office in Alameda County. Who are you?"

"Oh," he said, "I just happen to be the chief of police."

I said, "Well, for Gosh sake!"

Instead of coming right in, he stayed outside, see? I guess he expected me to go out, but I never knew Bob Powers, you see. He said, "I just happen to be the chief of police, and it happens to be my investigation," or some words to that effect.

I said, "Well, Gee, it sure is yours, anyway. We have a doctor here, and we want to be here to be of any help." He says, "Well, you sure are." He was very cold about it.

But that's Bob's nature. Instead of coming in and saying, "I want to talk to Jahnsen, or Dr. Hamlin as well," he didn't,

Jahnsen: he just stayed around there. Maybe he just got there, I don't know. We'd only been there maybe fifteen or twenty minutes, if we'd been there that long. We went in and looked at the body. We didn't touch anything, you see. I asked him over the phone if he'd leave everything intact so the criminologist could make some firm determinations.

Well, anyway, I'm sure that none of Bob's men were there. When I looked for these fellows, I come in the room, and I saw them sitting around, and Regan was sitting in a chair. One of the fellows said, 'Why'd you murder him?' Another fellow looked at him, looked right at him. For a long while there was a silence. It seems like a long [time].

Somebody else said, 'Well you did murder him, didn't you?' and 'What did you have against him?' All different questions, you know, shooting at the fellow from all different angles, you see? The fellow was getting more confused every minute. He knew that [they] thought that he was the fellow. If they'd never approached it that way, and had approached it from an entirely different angle, I'm satisfied that Regan would have told us more.

I just called Henningsen outside. I said, 'Don't you go back in there.' I got Ritchie out. Then I called the others out, and I said, 'There's no third degree. We're through. We'll take this man home; we're not going to investigate it any more. There'll be no more talking about him at all. This is third degree, in my book!' [pounds table for emphasis]

Now third degree normally is saying when you have a rubber hose and you hit the guy and you beat hell out of him and then beat [pounds table] the truth out of him, as they say, see? He confesses to something he never did for the purpose of not being beat anymore, see? But of course no hands was laid upon him, but it was mental, see? And this can be very effective!

King: And how!

Jahnsen: Very effective. We discontinued anything right then and there. I told them that even if we did get a statement out of him the defense would have a tremendous case to defend the man on, even if it was a true statement, and probably it would be true. But even then, the defense could say it was third degree, and if they put me on the witness stand, I would tell the truth.

Jahnsen: I would tell them exactly what happened and how the statement came about. I told them that.

I said, "You call me as a witness to what happened here, and I'd say every one of you guys were questioning him, one right after the other, four or five of you." I said, "This wouldn't be good." I said, "We're not going to do this. We're going to have to use a different tactic." The upshot was he clammed up and never did talk again.

King: Why do you think he murdered Warren? What do you think he murdered him for?

Jahnsen: Well, this is a hard question to answer, because you have no proof, but I always felt that he thought that he had borrowed money or borrowed something from Warren. As I say, you have no proof, because as I said earlier, Harry Miller would have turned every leaf over to find any mite that might be under it, had there been any loans or anything, and Matt Warren was supposed to be pretty good at keeping records. There was no losses in moneys in that deal.

Now certainly you could eliminate the fact that Matt Warren was infatuated with his [Regan's] wife. [Laughter] You could certainly eliminate the fact that Matt Warren was holding things over the man's head, and he wanted him to get away, he wanted to do away with him.

There's many things--by the process of elimination you'd come down to the fact it must have been because he was in some business deal or some financial transaction. Why were all the papers gone over? Why didn't he pick up the five dollars, if he was looking for money? Why would he throw a five away or a ten, maybe it was a thousand, I don't know. But why would he take-- Every paper was opened up, it was looked at and examined, but there was nothing found. If he found any paper, maybe he burned it himself.

Maybe Matt Warren was too shrewd and too good a business man to carry a note around in his pocket. Maybe he said he was going to pay him that afternoon, bringing him the money, and he wanted him to have the note. Maybe the note'd been in a safe deposit box. Maybe it was a confidential agreement.

Now remember, these are all maybes that I'm telling you. We don't know about that. We don't know of any safe deposit box that had been gone into that afternoon. However, Warren had gone in and out of his safe deposit box many times. We

Jahnsen: don't know what the transaction was. We don't know why he was murdered. We can only surmise.

Really, the facts that existed or the evidence that we obtained was indicative of the fact that somebody knew Warren, knew his habits, knew what he did, knew how to find him, when he was alone, and knew how to come back and not be afraid-- to cover him up--put him into bed and cover him up.

He could never have got in bed alone. He could never have done this alone. He must have died [pounds table] when he hit that bed. Somebody had to put him in bed. It must have been somebody that knew a lot about him, and not have any fear of anybody coming in. He could operate freely. The only person that could have done that was Regan.

King: I'm interested when you say that--

Jahnsen: I couldn't convince Warren of this.

King: You've persuaded me.

Jahnsen: Well, no, Warren believes that you gotta see the fellow shoot the guy! [Laughter] You gotta have an iron-clad case.

King: I'm interested that the children came to the funeral. Were they very close to their grandfather? Was the family very close in that way?

Jahnsen: Oh, I think it was a very close family, yes. I think it was a very close-knitted family. Close in some respects and not close in others. I think Ethel and Earl were close. He lived with her for a long while. Ethel was a very warm affectionate person, and she loved her brother dearly. When Earl got married I think that he was away from her more. I don't think she had any influence like she probably could wield over him when he lived there, if she did wield any influence, and I question that, too. I say, "Yes and no."

There was a division when Mrs. Warren came into the picture, naturally there would be, this is only a natural thing. He devoted all of his attention and his love for his children and for his wife, and things that he might have discussed with Ethel earlier ceased to be discussed, you see?

Jahnsen: Mrs. Warren, his mother, was a very lovely person, and his father was a very fine man. I don't think that there was anybody closer to them than Earl was, and Ethel. I think it would be like the ordinary family. Earl was very close to his children; everything that affected them would affect him, even Jim, his adopted son. He dearly loved Jim. I don't see how a father could love his own children any more than he loved Jim.

King: It's hard to know where he found time for getting around to all those kids in addition to everything else he did.

Jahnsen: Well, you know, sometimes when you're not troubled with the details of things-- It's like if you had to cook the meal and you had to get the carrots and the potatoes and everything all ready, and make sure all the dishes were washed and set on the table, and all these things. If you could just sit down and eat the meal and go, it would be all right; you'd have more time. He was a very well-organized man. He had everything organized to perfection. So he wasn't bothered with the cooking and the details, as I say. He had plenty of time on his hands.

Electoral Campaigns

King: Did you have anything to do with Warren's first campaign for election as DA? Did you take part in that at all?

Jahnsen: Yes, oh yes.

King: What was that like?

Jahnsen: You're talking about Preston Higgins now.

King: Yes. I know that the board of supervisors appoints you to the vacancy, and then you have to stand for election as an incumbent?

Jahnsen: I think I've told you the story about Johnny Mullins, and about Frank Shay.

King: Yes.

Jahnsen: This was in 1925. Ezra Decoto became a railroad commissioner, appointed by Governor Richardson, I think it was, Friend W. Richardson, who used to own the Berkeley Daily Gazette, by the way.

King: Oh, I didn't know that. That paper's gone downhill a long way since that time!

Jahnsen: Anyway, Earl Warren was appointed district attorney, with three votes in his favor, Charlie Heyer, Ralph Richmond, and Johnny Mullins. And Redmond Staats and--

King: Knox.

Jahnsen: No, no. Isn't that funny? It'll come to me. Anyway, he was from Alameda. These people were trying to work through Mike Kelly to make Frank Shay district attorney. Earl Warren was appointed. Then he had his own staff, but he didn't have any money. He had to travel on the budget that was given to Ezra Decoto, and Decoto hadn't any intention to do a lot of the things that Warren wanted to do. Bill Hamilton was the fellow's name.

What he did was ask for an appropriation. Now he had the board with him, because the board appointed him. This was in 1925 and his first budget would have been at the termination of the fiscal year of '24-'25, July 1, 1925 to end in '26, and '26 was the year of the election. Warren had to work up a lot of foam and a lot of steam, in order to get some recognition, at least he thought he did, I'm satisfied. So we were very active in enforcement of the law. Not just for this, but to put over his program, to let people know where he stood, see.

Many of these things that we did in 1925-'26, like raids and arrests and gangsters and bootleggers and every other thing that went on--prostitutes, bunko things, and so forth--and we only had four men then, you see--he got two appointed. It was [Chester] Flint and myself and [George] Helms and [Ray] Laughrey. Then he asked for four more men afterwards.

Then he ran against Preston Higgins. Preston Higgins had been formerly in the office, many years before, and was deputy city attorney.

Stein: City attorney of Oakland.

Jahnsen: And a fellow by the name of Dan Marovich, who's still alive, in Oakland.

King: Yes.

Jahnsen: Did you go and see him?

King: I spoke to him on the telephone. He's pretty far gone. At least, if I spoke to the right man, he's pretty far gone.

Jahnsen: Well, I told you that he wasn't too much. Well, anyway, Dan was very active in the city of Berkeley in the repeal of the Berkeley Prohibition law, and he was also very active later. He became friendly to Warren, not close friends, but associated as much as he could to do what he could for Warren after Pres Higgins was defeated.

The Knowlands, of course, the [Oakland] Tribune, was against the Mike Kelly people, you see? This is one of the things that I've always felt, that Warren wasn't dictated to by the Knowlands, but the Knowlands were happy to see Warren in the fight, and supported him because of the stand he took for good government.

King: Did he get into the issues--of course this is later, in 1931--but did he get into the issues of city government, or was he involved in the fight over consolidation, at all. I mean, when he was district attorney, did any of those things come up?

Jahnsen: To my looking back, Warren never got into anybody's fight. He never got into any political fights, for this person or that person.

King: I see. But he still was a Republican?

Jahnsen: Yes, but he never went out and endorsed people.

King: Yes, I know that.

Jahnsen: He did go out where there was fraud or crime, regardless of who the person was, regardless of his political standing. It wouldn't make any difference. More so, if they were higher up. He'd take after higher-ups. The Knowlands felt the same way, I'm satisfied. Not so much Bill as J. R. Later, of course,

Jahnsen: Bill was appointed by Warren to Hiram Johnson's spot and then was brought back from the army and United States senator.

But this was a different era, you might say, when we're starting out. The county was wide open, gangsters were hanging around, Chicago people were moving in, Emeryville was wide open. We had some people out there. There was an old fellow called "Gloomy Gus," and "Diamond Lil" [laughter]. A lot of these people from Kansas City were hanging around out there, and they were a haven. A fellow by the name of Batto Andrian, who was raised by some of these people. He was an orphan. A lot of prostitutes and everything else were there. Well, it was open.

King: When Warren ran for DA the first time did he speak to a lot of groups? Did he go to breakfast with the Knights of Columbus, and talk to the Masons, and people like that?

Jahnsen: Well, I wouldn't just say the Knights of Columbus and the Masons. I don't think this would be--you know, if somebody invited him. Well, let's say you had an association, a property-owners association, like Fruitvale Association, or maybe Santa Fe Association of Property Owners. He let the record stand pretty much for itself. The Post-Enquirer, Dick Carrington, down there, was very much in favor; [William R.] Hearst was very much.

It's a very interesting story that goes back on that Hearst deal. Some people were writing a book about Hearst, a small pamphlet that was trying to infer that Hearst had killed--I think the fellow's name was Myron Taylor, a movie actor. Threw him off a yacht when he was falling in love with Marion Davies. A lot of this stuff was really terrible that this fellow put up. There was a little book called The Blue Book, I think, something like that--just a little pamphlet.

Of course they came to Warren. They wanted to do something, and they had an idea who the fellow was. I handled that investigation. I went over and located it and located all the books. We took them out and burned them, destroyed them all, see? There wasn't any arrest made; it wasn't done with the intent to make any arrests. The fellow went off mighty lucky, because it could have been defamation of character. It could have been a criminal act of slaughtering somebody's reputation, you see?

- King: Did you stand up and speak for Warren at these meetings, or did you just go with him?
- Jahnsen: No, no, no. None of us did that. No, Warren was a fellow that would say, "You do your job, and I'll do the politics."
- King: I see.
- Jahnsen: No, you never went out. Well, if you knew your friends, you'd naturally want them to vote for him. We worked a very novel deal, and it was brought up, that you would hand in a list of all of the people that you knew, that you felt sure that would go along with you, that would be willing to support what you stood for, or what Warren stood for. It was an endorsement card.
- King: Oh, yes. I've signed these hundreds of times.
- Jahnsen: This endorsement card-- Well, a lot of these are off-shoots of this deal. It was never worked before.
- King: That's very interesting. You mean that this was a new technique?
- Jahnsen: This was new, at this time. What we did was worked out by Warren and Ralph Hoyt and many others--I don't think Harry Miller was there then. These cards were signed.
- King: These were postcards?
- Jahnsen: No, it wasn't a postcard. It wasn't put out so that the public could see it. I would give your name, and then I would ask you if you would sign this card for me. Say I went to five people, and each one signed. This would come back onto a list, and this list was taken care of.

Nobody in the office except volunteers, or maybe paid help, came in. The county's time and county's services were never used in these campaigns. Although it could have been done, and probably nothing said, it wasn't. We had a political group set up in the office, you see, and another outside of the office too.

Anyway, these cards were then taken and catalogued. Then a letter was sent, signed--actually signed--by Warren, thanking them for the endorsement of his candidacy, and asking them, if

Jahnsen: they felt so inclined, could they have five of their friends-- and there were five cards enclosed in the envelope, no more than five--sign. A stamped envelope was enclosed to send them back to him. Well, these cards begin to pile up, pile up, pile up.

Then if somebody came along later and wanted to say "Vote for Higgins," or something like this, the individual might say, "Well, I haven't made up my mind yet," or "Yeah, when I get there," but when he got in that old booth to vote his conscience would naturally say, "Well, Gee! I signed that card," if he was any kind of a person, see? This rolled up a tremendous vote for Warren. I think it was 26,000--some odd in that first election--a majority.

King: Really that is a lot!

Jahnsen: Preston Higgins was defeated. Then Warren went all out to enforce all laws, but not to take advantage of anybody. We went out and we notified everybody what we were going to do. We sat down and had meetings, and we notified all the people who were operating slot machines and punchboards that they would have to quit, desist, and get rid of their equipment, that someday we would be around and we'd pick them up. I told you that story.

King: Yes. Let me ask you one other question about the Republican party. When Warren goes to become a state member of the Republican party, and this is about 1928 or '29, I guess, how does that happen? I mean, does he just go and say, "I want to serve on the state committee," or had he been active on the local committee. Does somebody put him up for that?

Jahnsen: Yes. He is proposed by members of the Republican party.

King: Does anybody remember who--

Jahnsen: Not only that, he was district attorney, and he was secretary, and knew a lot of-- It's just to work your way up. He's a shining light, so they would say, "Well, Jesus--put him up!"

King: Well, I wondered if you remembered anybody who promoted him.

Jahnsen: No.

King: He just made his way right up--

Jahnsen: Warren never had any money.

King: No. I was wondering how he paid the county \$15,000.

Jahnsen: Warren's way was made up by his honesty and his integrity, his ability, his intelligence, his being a mastermind at organizational work. He knew how to organize these things. He could always step into something and start organizing it.

King: He's given credit for having united the Hiram Johnson faction and the conservative wing of the Republican party in California.

Jahnsen: Well, I think he has united the party a good deal in that time, because remember Hiram Johnson was an ultra-conservative and Warren was not an ultra-liberal, but he was liberal. Warren believed in the rights of men, not in the rights of the party.

The S.S. Vancouver Episode

King: I did want to make sure to ask you about the S.S. Vancouver.

Jahnsen: It came about this way. We were eating lunch, a couple of the other inspectors and myself, in the Checker restaurant, on Broadway. We used to go there for lunch. It was between Seventeenth and Nineteenth Streets on Broadway. We knew the fellow that ran it, a fellow named Reno Hoeffler. He was related to Hoeffler's chocolate candy factory. In fact he married a schoolgirl chum of mine, so we used to go up there and eat, and they had a nice lunch.

As we came out I ran into a fellow named Harry Adams and a few others from the sheriff's office, and they said, "Gee, they blew a ship up in the Bay." I said, "Where?" "Over in the estuary." That's all I needed. That's all he had to tell me, see? He told me about what had happened.

King: That's the port of Oakland.

Jahnsen: Yes. Well, it was either in Alameda or Oakland, but it was in Alameda County.

King: That's right.

Jahnsen: It was in the Bay, so it could be Alameda, it could be the district attorney's lookout then, see? I just said, "Was anybody hurt?" He says, "I don't know. It just happened. They blew it up." He's in the sheriff's office, in the criminal division, one of the top guys in it. They go in and eat their lunch. [Laughter]

Well I would never have stopped for lunch. I immediately got right down to the district attorney's office. Mr. Warren wasn't around, but Ralph Hoyt was. You have a copy of that picture when we're coming off the ship--not coming off, but getting on. That was taken purely for the newspapers.

When I got to the office, I told Ralph Hoyt, "Jeez, did you hear about it? They blew a ship up in the Bay!" He said, "No." I said, "Yeah. We can probably see it," but we couldn't.

We got on the phone right away, and phoned the Alameda police. They said, "Yes, there was a ship blown up out by the airport, the Naval air station out there." I said, "What's being done about it?" "Well, they were gonna find out about it, and they were gonna do some work on it.

I said to Ralph, "Let's get going--we gotta get over there. We can't just stay here and fool around." "Well," he said, "wait'll the chief comes back." We couldn't find Warren, and finally he came in. I told him, "I've got it all set up; we've got to get over and find out." He was for this.

Remember now, I think this was November, about the time when he was going to run for attorney general. This was very hot. This was shortly after his father's murder, see? There was a lot of things could affect this election, see? He was running for [U.S.] Webb's spot, because Webb wasn't going to be attorney general. So [he] said, "Fine."

We went right over. The ship was out a little bit. We got a boat and went out there, and the fellow had run the ship--as she started to sink he ran the ship into the dock--into the pier. Now what actually happened, to digress a minute, these people that blew the ship up had gone to Encinal Terminal and they had taken a small tin box. Do you remember what a Nabisco can looked like--do you know what Nabisco's were?

King: Oh, sure!

Jahnsen: They used to come in little tin boxes? Well, this would be about four of those little tin boxes about this thick and about that wide, and they put about a pound and a half of TNT in it. They then had attached to it some magnets which were called "little giants." They got underneath the dock, and they had these magnets fastened to the tin box, and got underneath the wharf. The minute they would get this far from the side of it, just where the engine room was, they knew that this water pressure on the outside couldn't give. They knew that the ship's side would have to give.

They were experienced in this thing. Somebody who did this knew what they were doing. They lowered this down so it attached itself to the ship's side. When the ship sailed, it was no problem for them, because underneath these wharves is lots of beams you can walk around on. They just disappeared, and when the ship came down the estuary, the thing was timed so about the time--the ship was a little delayed--it was timed so when the ship got off of Goat Island, as we call it, out there, which is the deepest part of the Bay, because the tide coming in one way, and going out the other, causes a swirl, and it throws all the mud over on the Alameda side. It's just like an augur, it just grinds, and if that ship had gone down there there'd have been a lot of people lost. It'd have been an awful thing to get it out.

But because of some delay, or because in this timing, it blew up going down the estuary. It blew a hole in the ship's side about the size of this fireplace, see? And you could drive a--

King: Did you ever find out who "they" were? Who did the blowing up?

Jahnsen: No. Not exactly, but I'll come to that. [Laughter]

You could drive a jeep in the hole, it was so big! You could drive a jeep through that fireplace, if it could get there. When the ship sunk, as it was sinking, the captain turned the ship into the side, you see, and it landed in the mud. When we came out there, the coast guard was out there, too.

Now the coast guard would have somewhat jurisdiction on the maritime side, see? But the prosecution of any criminal matter, of anybody bombing a ship or anything, happened inside the port, was beyond the jurisdiction, you might say, of the federal

Jahnsen: government, although they could probably take concurrent jurisdiction.

At this time Fritz Wiedeman, who was the consul-general in San Francisco, had a fellow by the name of Bernhard, and Bernhard was the assistant vice-consul, or the vice-consul. He was on the ship at the time. In other words, an hour or two had passed when we got over there.

King: I see. So the federal people got there first?

Jahnsen: No, this is the German consul.

King: Oh, the German consul? I'm sorry, I see.

Jahnsen: The German consul had got there. Fritz Wiedeman was the consul general.

King: This was a German boat, the Vancouver?

Jahnsen: The Vancouver was a German ship being loaded. It was during the war. We weren't at war, at that time. This was going back to Germany. It was loaded with a lot of heavy timber, and a lot of fruit and things on it--it was a refrigerator ship--apples and one thing and another. It had many items that Germany needed.

King: So it was an act of sabotage, really?

Jahnsen: So it was sabotage, yes. It was Communist sabotage, to knock them out, you see? There were doing this every place they could.

The chief mate's name was Lindeman, and the captain's name just slips me right now. When we got there, Bernhard said, "You can't come aboard!" So I said, "Well, we're coming aboard." He says, "You can't come on board. This is a German vessel and I'm the German consul."

Well, I said--I asked him his name--"Mr. Bernhard, you're the German consul and have some diplomatic immunity, but if you're gonna protect the criminals that were sinking this ship, that's a different thing. We're gonna hold the ship, and we're gonna hold anybody responsible for it, regardless of who they are--" Warren is standing, and the rest of them--"because this happened in our county."

Jahnsen: I said, "This is Mr. Warren, the district attorney, and Mr. Hoyt, the chief assistant district attorney, and we're here to interview you people to find out who committed this crime. This is it. There'll be nobody leave, there'll be no tugboats or nothing come along side."

He said [German accent now], "The only ones on board is the district attorney and his people! Nobody else comes on board!" [Laughter] So we got aboard. We began to get the statements, talk to them, to find out.

Of course we didn't know what damage was done then, and of course divers were ordered and they went down and patched the hole in the side of the vessel, and we pumped the ship out. That time I accidentally slipped in the engine room and was in bed for quite a while afterwards, with being injured there.

We did run down where the magnets came from. We found the box, the remains of the box. We were very careful when the ship was being pumped out so we didn't lose anything, because all the water flooded the engine room and everything else. Then the ship was taken to Moore Dry Docks and put in dry dock and it was gone over to evaluate the damage. Now, I have those pictures, of the ship's hull and the whole thing, and pictures of Warren, and it might be a good idea to give them to you. If I run across them, I'll give them to you.

King: All right. Fine.

Jahnsen: There's a big stack of them. It gives you all of the engineering facts and everything else on it. The facts of the investigation won't be there, other than the pictures.

Of course we worked on it quite a bit. Again, this was another period of time when many investigations were going on. In 1930 the political campaign was going on. We were successful in eliminating anybody on the ship having anything to do with it.

We came to the conclusion from the information that we got from a place over on I think it was Front Street, a place that sold these magnets. Hard to identify. Very powerful. They had remembered selling a couple of dozen of these magnets to a certain individual. We were never able to get beyond that very

Jahnsen: far to determine who they were.

But about this time we were at war with Germany, so this ended the investigation, you see. I think we would have solved it. We would have solved it, but because of the war situation developing, and Hitler invading Belgium and Poland and all these places, and the United States becoming involved, then, more and more-- The ship left.

The captain had a sister-in-law lived in New Jersey someplace. He wanted his wife to come over there, and he would like to have gone there and stayed with his sister or his sister-in-law, and so forth. I know in World War I he was a submarine commander, and he told me some very interesting stories. Lindeman, the chief officer, was in World War I, and told me some very interesting stories. As a matter of fact, when the ship went down, all of their supplies, beer and everything--and beer to a German is like-- [Laughter] Sure. They needed it. What we did was, we went over to the Golden West Brewery, where we had some connections. A lot of those brewers over there were Germans, so we had no trouble in getting a few dozen cases of beer and having them transferred over at no cost. Of course this endeared them to us. They thought we were Germans, then, I guess, and we were loyal, see, to Hitler.

Anyway they were very friendly, and we did give them a lot of help in every way we could. They wanted to stay in this country. They weren't anxious to go back. Some of the stories that they told from World War I--sinking of the ships, and the submarine service and everything else--the captain, Messinger was his name, was very anxious to stay in this country. He didn't want any of Hitler or any of those people, you see. But he couldn't do anything, so they went back. Later we heard that Lindeman was immediately taken into the service again, and so was the old captain. I guess they've passed on by now, you know.

It was an interesting case, and it was interesting to see what went on. They were loyal seamen, what I would say. They weren't Nazis, or anything like that. But they were under the Nazi rule, and they had to do what they were told to do. If they didn't, it would be "Goodbye."

King: There was no way you could jump ship? I mean there was nothing that they could do?

Jahnsen: Oh, you could jump ship, sure. There wasn't anything they could do--jump ship--but where would they go? They'd be up against United States immigration--where would they get a job?

King: I guess so.

Jahnsen: The German societies would have to help them. Fritz Wiedeman was the consul general, and Fritz Wiedeman was a Nazi, so the minute these fellows--so was Bernhard. Bernhard lived in Alameda, I think, or down the Peninsula--there was no way--

King: They wouldn't give them any kind of asylum--

Jahnsen: Why no! They would turn them in, see? The minute they found out they were gone. The captain would report a loss of seamen, or a loss of an engineer, something like that. This he would have to report to the consul general, the man's name, his description, this would go to the police. They'd hope he'd be arrested and executed. Fritz Wiedeman was considered one of the best spies they had, if you ever remember back.

King: Yes, I remember that sort of vaguely.

Jahnsen: He was considered here the eyes and ears of the German Imperial Government.

The Bunco Squad

King: I'd like to hear some about your work on the bunco squad. Didn't one of your big investigations have to do with a man named Gilstrap and some oil claims?

Jahnsen: This is a case which Jimmy Oakley would be very happy to tell you about.

Gilstrap was a criminal type of prospector, a phony, a bunco man. He lived out in San Leandro and he organized an oil company out in Livermore.

King: Oh, I thought it was in downstate California.

Jahnsen: No, in Livermore, in the hills in Livermore. He maintained that the Standard Oil Company, and the major oil companies, were trying to put him out of business.

Now, there's two different cases that are very similar in their operations in this sense: one is the case of the Cox Process Company, which was making oil--paying oil--out of asphalt from the streets, a process that they took from shale rock in Palomares Canyon. From this material they could take even the asphalt in the street and get paying gasoline out of it.

King: And you mean people believed that?

Jahnsen: Yes. Oh! You wait. And it was harder to sell them back, and I had a hell of a job selling a lot of them back on the truth. They believed it was different, and that's another case.

But in the Gilstrap case, Gilstrap maintained that Earl Warren was a tool of the major oil companies. This is typical of all buncos, same in the Cox Process Company. He said that the big oil companies were questioning him, you see; this new process would revolutionize the oil industry, and all the big distilleries, and everything would go out of business. It was worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

I wrote twenty-six pages of notes on a conversation that Bob Tracy and I had with Gilstrap in his home in San Leandro when we arrested him. Bob Tracy, by the way, former chief of police of Oakland, at that time was in the bunco detail of the Oakland police department, assistant of Jimmy Drew, his chief, and who I knew very well, because I worked in the chief's office in 1920-'21 with Drew and Bob. Bob just recently died. It's a shame you never got a chance to interview him.

King: When does this take place, approximately? I'm off on this, because I thought Gilstrap was about '38 or '40, and that it was already in the AG's office.

Jahnsen: Well, I think you could get this better from the short stories in Alameda County. I think it was probably about 1936, '37, along in there. I'm not sure--I'm not too good at that.

King: Yesterday the lady in the DA's office told me she was sure all the short stories from the 1930s had been destroyed. I told her it was impossible!

Jahnsen: No, they're not destroyed. I'm sure of that. Go down and ask if you can review a few cases, and then you'll know whether they're there or not. Of course they could have destroyed them, but I doubt it, because they're filed in little books like this and about so thick, and there were several copies of them. One had to be used for operational experiences.

The district attorney and the chief assistant had copies in their offices, you see, so if anybody come in and you wanted to ask Mr. Warren a question about a certain case, he'd reach back and pull out, or send for the short story, and read the short story, and in a few minutes, he'd have a picture of the whole case. It was a brief of the whole case. The minute you come in and started talking about it--you wouldn't know he knew a thing about it, but he was very well briefed on it, by this time.

Anyway, as a result, Gilstrap brought suit against a number of us, including Oakland police officer, Bob Tracy, and against the district attorney, myself and a few others. It was very flattering because he brought suit for \$100,000,000--in one case \$200,000,000 and some odd million, and a \$100,000,000 in another. He brought them in the federal court in Washington, D.C.

This meant that Jimmy Oakley had to go back to Washington to defend this. If he didn't appear, Gilstrap could have won the suit by default, see? He filed in these different areas. Of course he made a lot of money in getting suckers and victims to put into this Gilstrap oil company. He maintained he was putting wells in out in Livermore.

Jim, then, wanted me to-- We testified in the case, of course, to send him to prison, so they wanted to get those notes. I gave them the notes. I don't know whether I ever got them back, or not. I think they're still in the evidence. In talking with Gilstrap, he gave us quite a lengthy story. I think it was twenty-six pages of notes that I wrote which gave times, dates and places, and a lot of conversation. That was very important to him in the case.

King: That was a big fraud case in Alameda County, wasn't it?

Jahnsen: Well, it was a big case. He took a lot of money. Same way with the Cox Process Company. Sell you a block of stock from \$10,000. Many people got taken in it.

Jahnsen: Cox Process was a very interesting case. A fellow by the name of Wetherill was one of the prime movers in it. He got ahold of a fellow by the name of James Cox. Wetherill was pretty sly, pretty slick. He could stay in the background. They built up in Palomares Canyon a phony plant, and they posted guards around, and dogs.

They did the same thing in Gilstrap's place: put wire around so you couldn't get around, because the operation was so secret they wouldn't let anybody even know about it. [Laughter]

King: Marvelous!

Jahnsen: These plants, if you examined them very closely, instead of having a real smoke-stack go up, they took fifty-five gallon drums--you know these big oil drums? And they cut the heads and the bases out of them and welded them together, so many of them. Then they stuck them up with guy lines, and they were all painted with aluminum paint like new. Everything was just new, fresh, and everything else. They all walked around with white jackets on, and so forth. [Laughter] They had a great, big lab with a lot of bunsen burners and everything on it.

There is a material, and I can't think of the chemical name for it, but it's limited in its power, but with this type of material you could take a small vial and by putting an ounce or a half an ounce of this material with certain fluids--like if you took crude oil, it would cause the heavy crude to sink to the bottom and the lighter fluid to come to the top, with just a drop in it. So they would put a drop in this and they'd say, "Bring me any oil you want--bring me some of your oil, and I'll show you how we can refine it. Just give me any oil--get some out of the street, if you want," see? "Give me some of your crankcase oil."

They had salesmen like this. They'd put a drop of this and shake it up and let it set there, and pretty soon here you'd find a clear liquid at the top, which was a refined--in a sense "higher grade" oil, or a gasoline, you might say. This was the selling point, and they would tell people this is what it would do. But it was a secret process, it was the Cox Process. Cox Chemical Company with the Cox Process.

Jahnsen: What we did then, we begin getting some complaints, and we begin looking into it, and it begin to smell kind of phony. So we went out and got Professor U'Ren, I guess he's retired from the University of California, a professor of chemistry. We got another professor by the name of Beckmann out there. No, Beckmann was a chemist, and U'Ren was in something else. But they had got some people down south, and as a result we got somebody down there too from Cal Tech, a professor, in this thing. Coakley can give you all this stuff, because he tried the case.

King: Coakley or Oakley are we talking about now?

Jahnsen: Frank Coakley, former district attorney. He was the one that was handling the case at that time. That's the Cox Process Company case. I think he was in on Gilstrap, too. George Perkins might have been the one on Gilstrap.

At any rate, we showed that this material was a fraud. I can remember very clearly in some of these cases some of the things that happened. There was a woman that was selling some of this material. Her name was Jesse Gibbs, and she was indicted. She was sister to a fellow who was with one of the big oil companies down in Bakersfield. Of course Warren was from down there--this was around Taft and Maricopa and so forth. There was a fellow named Clancy down there who owned a furniture store.

It was up to us to dig up evidence of some of these people so they'd testify that they had been defrauded. Now they were so strongly sold, in fact a family that I had worked for as a boy--a shipping firm, W.R. Chamberlin & Company--I was an office boy there--they thought nothing of buying \$10,000 blocks of stock in this stuff. But you couldn't convince a lot of these people they had been defrauded.

The thing was that this process was going to be sold to the major oil companies because of the material they got from the shale rock, which was this little stuff that they would put in this bottle here, and the shale rock came from Palomares Canyon. There was only one or two places in the world, and this was it, where they have it. Palomares Canyon is a canyon that used to run from Dublin around through getting into Dublin from Hayward through this back canyon. It was all guarded off so nobody could get in there. We'd been in there looking for

Jahnsen: stills many a time before, so we knew the place pretty well.

So anyway, this material was so valuable and it would take a tremendous amount of money in order to put it on the market, but once it was on the market, and once the thing was firmed up, the oil companies would be willing to pay hundreds of millions of dollars. If you had \$10,000 in shares you were a millionaire, see? Just like nothing, see? It was terrific.

I remember going down, wanting to find out a little bit about Mrs. Gibbs, and talking to this fellow Clancy. Henningsen was with me. It was harder to sell these people on the truth than it was to sell them in the first place on the stock, 'cause this was gonna be a million dollars. Pretty hard to let go of a million bucks.

When I got there this day, I asked for Mr. Clancy. I went in and I told him who I was, representing the district attorney's office of Alameda County, and I understood that he and Mrs. Gibbs's brother--can't think of his name right off-handed--were interested in this. I wanted to inquire about how he became interested in it, and Mrs. Gibbs was a saleswoman in this, and wanted to know all about it.

He said, "Well, I'd like to ask you some questions about it." He asked me all about the operation, so I told him about it. I guess it took about a good hour to tell him about this whole thing and what we thought of it and what we'd found out, and so forth, and that it wasn't the big oil companies or anything else, and so forth. Mrs. Gibbs's brother came in and he got into the thing. About every fifteen minutes somebody else would come in and sit down and so we had a regular conference, a regular meeting of about fifteen people that were interested in it. Standard Oil was very interested, down in that neck of the woods, and so were the other major oil companies.

Her brother came in and he insisted that this was a lie, and that Earl Warren was in the pay of the big major oil companies, and they were breaking up this thing. I said, "Well, maybe you'd be interested in hearing the story." "Naw," it was a lot of bunk, I was just for Earl Warren, and I was in on the conspiracy, and a lot of other things.

Finally, the thing that broke it, Clancy got up, and he said, "Well, I'm going to tell you something, fella. You'd better sit down and listen. I think your sister's involved in

Jahnsen: this thing very deeply, and I've listened to this man talk now to me for an hour and to talk to these other people for another hour, about two hours and a half altogether, and he hasn't deviated one iota from the whole story. We've asked him a lot of questions, and there hasn't been one question we can find any fault [with.] I've been waiting to hear him say something that I could trip him on. I'm satisfied that we're suckers and we were taken, and all the rest of you fellas that go along with the idea of Gibbs, okay. But I'm not going to go along. I'm going to go along with Earl Warren, and I think we were suckers." That broke that deal.

We went down further, to Los Angeles, and I talked to a little woman--it was out on Hoover Street--she was a widow; in fact, several of them down there were widows. Widows seem to be the biggest victims.

I went out and I talked to her and she was very anxious to talk to me. She wanted to know how the thing was coming out, how the money was, and everything else. I got talking with her and I explained this thing to her. She said, "Well, that's the last."

She had a little gas heater burning. She didn't have a pan of water on it, and the atmosphere was very dry, and it was burning up all the oxygen. You could be asphyxiated, you see, from monoxide--in fact I lost a brother that way--and so I was quite concerned about it. I said to her, "Don't you think it would be a good idea to put a little pan of water on here so you won't be asphyxiated, and get some air in here? This is too tough." She said, "What difference does it make?"

King: Oh!

Jahnsen: She says, "You know I'm the widow of a lawyer, and a very prominent lawyer in New York, and he left me very well fixed. But like a lot of women that have somebody caring for them all the time, and looking after them, and taking care of all their needs and their wants, I became so dependent that I didn't make any provisions. The last \$10,000 I had I put in this, and thought I was going to recoup. I've played in card games and bridge games and I've lost thousands of dollars, so what difference does it make if I'm asphyxiated?"

Jahnsen: I went to another woman--I had charge of this bunco detail, so I hate a bunco man. She lived down around where houses are torn out, a lot of big buildings are down in there--it was off of Temple Street, probably about Sixth Street in Los Angeles. It was a little old rooming house and I went in there and I told her who I was. She didn't quite understand me, and I said, "I'm here about the Cox Process Company--" "Oh! I'm so happy-- Come in!" she says. "Did we sell it? Did we get our money? Have we got the money? Oh, I've been waiting, every day, I've been waiting. I'm so badly in debt, I need the money. Gee! When do we get the money?" She started going like this.

I fell back a minute, and I waited until she got all the exuberance out of her, and I said, "Well, gee, I'm here to tell you a sad story." She says, "Nothing happened, it didn't burn down or something didn't go wrong, did it?" I said, "Well, just about. But I have to tell you that this is a fraud. I'm representing the district attorney of Alameda County." I had to then tell her the facts. Pathetic, see?

How we got the statements from them was a rather interesting thing. We heard that Wetherill and some of these people were coming up from Southern California, and were going to hold a meeting in the St. Francis Hotel. You have to bunco a bunco man. You have to sell them a bill of goods. You just have to defraud the bunco man. You have to give him some of his own medicine, see?

We heard that this meeting was going on over there, so we wanted to question Mr. Wetherill, and the only way I could get him to come across the Bay from San Francisco to Oakland would be to give him some good reason to come over, to make it worth his while to come over. In other words, I'd not enough to arrest him on--to take him in--and if I did, he was smart enough to want a lawyer, see? He'd want representation. I had to do this in a way that was a little off-the-cuff kind of a deal.

I went up and knocked on the door, and lo and behold, Cox and Wetherill and a number of other people were in there. They were holding a big conference. Apparently they'd just got going when I knocked on the door. I had a fellow named Joe Brandon, who was an investigator of ours, with me--he's out in Hayward; he has a collection agency out there now. He knew a lot about Palomares Canyon and the Cox, because he was in Hayward. A lot of the things that he knew about that place out there were very

Jahnsen: valuable. A good officer--he was a former deputy constable out there.

Now bear in mind, I just took it on a chance of going over and asking him to come over, and getting some deputies to interview him. It was just one of those things on the spur that happened. When we got in, I said, "Is Mr. Wetherill here?" He says, "Yes, I'm Mr. Wetherill."

I said, "Mr. Wetherill, I'm from the district attorney's office in Alameda County, and I hear that you people are holding a meeting today, and Mr. Warren is quite anxious to talk to you. We've had stories one way or the other. We don't want to interfere with the operation of your business out there, whatever you're doing, whatever the business is, but it was suggested that if I come over and if you're available, he would like to talk to you personally, and it would be a good idea if you came over. Rather than to cause a lot of furor and cause a lot of trouble, because we're all in the dark on it, but some people are saying one thing, and other people are saying another thing, but I'm really not too familiar with what it is. So I think it would be advisable for you to come over and talk to him."

He said, "Well, we're just holding a meeting. Let's do it this afternoon, or how about tomorrow?" I said, "Well, today is Saturday. We can't do it tomorrow, and Mr. Warren's going out of town. Let me get him on the phone." I got on the phone, and of course Warren wasn't there. I got one of the inspectors, and I said, "I want to talk to Mr. Warren--Hello! Yes, this is Oscar. Mr. Wetherill is here and he would like to come over and talk to you, but providing it didn't take too much time. If you could just wait a little bit, he'll come right over, and then if he didn't want to waste too much time, 'cause he's got a meeting here with some very important people. But if you'll be waiting for him, I'm sure he'll go over.' Isn't that right, Mr. Wetherill? Well he said he'd be there, Mr. Wetherill, if we could go right over. We have a car here. We'd be glad to take you over, and bring you back."

Of course, I hung up the phone, and he gasped for breath, and the point was already made. I said, "If any of the rest of you people'd like to come along we'd be perfectly happy to take you." We got in some of their cars, and our car was outside, and we loaded the main subjects in our car, so if the others got away I didn't care. So across the bridge we went.

Jahnsen: In the meantime, the word was left that Mr. Warren would be back from lunch. He went out and had a bite to eat, and he'd be right back, "So if you'd just sit down." So I set them in different offices, so they couldn't commune, or converse with one another what their stories would be, and so forth. Then I phoned Ralph Hoyt, and got ahold of Coakley and some of the other deputies. Warren wasn't going to show up at all. [Laughter]

They started interviewing them and taking statements, you see? We got all these statements from them and then when they'd finished we'd lock them up in the county jail. But on the way out, I grabbed a briefcase that was sitting on his bed. This briefcase had a lot of personal things in it. I just picked it up. [Laughter] I figured it might have some value, see? So I took his briefcase along with me.

We got over there and we found that Mr. Wetherill had been married and he had a little daughter. The little girl had written "Daddy, Mommy wants me to tell you she thanks you for the money to buy the big doll, but we can't afford it. Mommy said I needed the money for clothes, and that someday she would get me a doll, but we'd have to use the money for clothes." He deserted his wife and this little girl.

There was also a letter in there from a very fine sweetheart, a green sweater girl, that was a very lovely friend of Mr. Wetherill, who had a little boy. He was sending this boy to the military academy, spending \$400 or \$500 a month, besides clothes and everything else, and supporting this girl. He put her up in a very fashionable hotel down in Los Angeles all out of this bum money, out of this graft. But he didn't have enough to feed his own flesh and blood. I have no use for this kind of a guy.

King: It's a pathetic story.

Jahnsen: The upshot was, when it came time about this guy--you could see what your feeling was. He was just a filthy, rotten liar inside.

Now Coakley kind of fell for this guy. Coakley thought the guy was a terrific guy. Coakley fell for him, and he still feels for the guy. But they all went to the penitentiary anyway. [Laughter]

Jahnsen: And Mr. Cox. We went out there and raided the place. He invited people out. He was going to make a demonstration of how this process worked. We give him the opportunity during the trial. Cox came in and was going to demonstrate, so we thought it was a good idea to go out to the plant. Take the jury out there and let him demonstrate this process, see?

Stein: So you all went out there?

Jahnsen: Yes. Fortunately, or unfortunately for him, but fortunately for the public, his demonstration fell through--he couldn't produce. So Mr. Cox did one to fourteen and Mr. Wetherill did the same, but they eventually got out. Of course they did their time. But these are bunco cases: trick and device and fraud. Now that's the Cox Process Company and the Gilstrap case that I told you about. Mr. Coakley can fill you in on the Cox and Mr. Oakley'll fill you in on the Gilstrap.

The Case of Miss Lucey and the Highway Patrolman

King: You told me once that there were two cases that we didn't have in our listing that you thought were very important in Warren's career, as district attorney, and I thought maybe we could pick those up this afternoon. One of them was "Miss Lucey and the Highway Patrolman," I remember your telling me about that one.

Jahnsen: Oh, yes. The district attorney's office was so arranged that if we had a very serious homicide, or anything else, that certain people would be called, and certain stenographers would be called. Not always were they standing by, but usually in most cases they might be.

There was a fellow by the name of Maloney. He was married and he had a brother-in-law by the name of-- It'll come to me. Maloney was a traffic officer in the San Francisco police department--used to ride the horse, that kind of thing. He'd fallen in love, or was having an affair with, Miss Lucey.

Miss Lucey was the sister of Inspector Lucey of the San Francisco police department. She was a school teacher down in Hayward in the public schools. Russ Bevans is the brother-in-law, who was director of motor vehicles in the [James] Rolph administration at the time.

Jahnsen: Prior to this, before the organization of the highway patrol, the traffic officers used to work out of the district attorney's offices in the state, and they were paid by the board of supervisors, but their office [pounding for emphasis] was under the district attorney. They'd file complaints, and so forth. At this time they had transferred over to the highway patrol.

Maloney--they went on a binge. They both got pretty high, and they were really carrying on over this weekend. There was a family named the Davises, and they had a son and a daughter, the old lady, the old man, and there was another family with them and they were traveling down the highway, and so was Maloney, driving Miss Lucey's car, drunk, on a Sunday afternoon around the fourth of July, something like that. They hit the car of the Davises, and turned it over. Mr. Davis's head lay under the edge of the car and [it] ground his head off along the cement. Very interesting thing! It killed a couple of people and injured several. Of course, her car was damaged considerably.

It happened just south of Hayward, on this Sunday afternoon, and many people showed up, on a big Sunday afternoon highway. Miss Lucey got very nasty and very vulgar in her talk in the conversation, and she called everybody a lot of names, and claimed, "Look what these people did to my car--look at my car!" Well, look at this guy's head strung along the highway, see, and his brains out there, see? "Look what happened to my automobile!" Mahoney didn't have much to say.

King: He sobered up.

Jahnsen: Well, no, he was drunk. So the highway patrol immediately showed up and started interrogating him. A fellow named Louis Eik, who was the captain of the patrol and formerly worked in the office, a fellow named Tony Rose, a fellow named Duffy Lewis, and a couple of others, they showed up--you won't need their names. These people are very fine people. I mention their names in here, not for the idea of having a record go out. If you go back to the newspapers, you can find it.

They were going to take this fellow into custody. It was discovered that they wanted to phone, so naturally they let them use the telephone. They phoned Russ Bevans, and he told them--at that time the Highway Patrol was in the Department of Motor Vehicles, and Russ Bevans was their chief and their boss--

Jahnsen: "Turn the guy loose. Don't worry, he'll show up," see?

Well it wasn't long before we heard about this. I went out with a group of investigators and some deputies--I think Wehr was one of them, and some of the others. We got out on the scene, and we started taking statements, and so forth.

Of course in this case the grand jury was impaneled. They went before the grand jury, and Mahoney and Miss Lucey were indicted. He pled guilty and went to San Quentin. Rolph released him, then, because he was dying with TB. A police officer going into prison as a criminal doesn't have much opportunity--they'd probably kill him anyway, these cons would, you see. He was given a special assignment, like they do with most of these officers when they get sent to prison. They isolate them and put them in different branches of the prison so they won't be victims, you see, of the other criminals.

The upshot is that it was agreed upon that if she would go and apologize to the grand jury for her statement that she made there, and she lost her job with the school department, and she wasn't driving the car, she was in and about an automobile while drunk. In those days that law wasn't in effect--there was no law then. She was let go, and the grand jury rescinded the indictment and they dismissed the case against her, and she went to the penitentiary. What was it about that?

King: Well you thought this was very important in the--

Jahnsen: Well, it was important to this extent--he prosecuted a San Francisco police officer, and there was a lot of publicity about it.

King: That's right. And a man whose uncle was in the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Jahnsen: Yes. His brother-in-law. Not only that, it got into politics in the Rolph administration. In addition to that, the San Francisco police department was working very close with the Alameda County district attorney's office. When Matt Brady was district attorney they were prosecuting any number of their cases. They could say, "If you could get a leg in Alameda County, we'll transfer the case over there so Warren could prosecute them," see? They used the term, "Warren would settle 'em," you see? This would be a way. They wouldn't just accept

Jahnsen: a plea to a lesser offense, they would be tried and prosecuted, like the yacht bandits. I think we mentioned that case.

King: Yes, you told me about those boys.

Jahnsen: But in a case that was a driving-while-drunk case, and the arrest of a police officer, and prosecuting regardless. Don't worry, there was a lot of feeling about this fellow getting arrested and going to jail, but what the hell could you do?

King: I'm sure that's true.

Jahnsen: He was undoubtedly prosecuted.

What was the other case?

King: I don't remember. You didn't tell me that. You said there were two and you had that chronology and you'd made a note on it, but I couldn't read your handwriting upside down. You said it was another case. Maybe it was the Gosden murder case, is that possible?

Jahnsen: Warren Olney could tell you all about the Gosden case. George Hard handled that.

There was another case-- This man was a representative of the Zellerbach paper company--the name slips me right now. But at any rate, he was down by Niles, and we got a call that there was a man throwing rocks at automobiles through the automobile windows. This fellow took a big chunk of cement off the highway and he threw it at the windshield of a car, and tore a man's head off when it went through his car, and killed the man. This case had to be thoroughly investigated that night, right then and there. [Pounds for emphasis] We had to get out on the job and complete the case. A lot of people had to be interviewed before any defense could be framed as to what had happened.

We worked all night and part of the next day before we wound the case up. The man was arrested, and then later he plead guilty and was convicted and went to the penitentiary.

But this was one of the cases--all of these people were injured, and all of these automobiles had to be impounded, all the photographs had to be taken, all the statements had to be

Jahnsen: taken. The individual had to be talked to, and a legal statement taken. He had to be taken out of the hands of local authorities and taken down to the district attorney's office and put in the county jail and interviewed, and this was all done in a matter of hours.

The Kidnap Squad

Jahnsen: We had another case. I think the case that you were referring to when we were talking about it was the organization of the kidnap squad, and how it worked and how fast it worked.

King: Maybe that's right.

Jahnsen: And how quick it went. They kidnaped the warden at San Quentin prison--the whole prison board and directors--some of the criminals did this.

Stein: I remember reading about that.

Jahnsen: They took over. When Warren organized the kidnap squad, he got two men from the sheriff's office, two men from our office, two from the Oakland police department--they were in that picture I gave you--two from San Leandro, and two from Berkeley.

King: But how do you get over to San Quentin? Isn't that Marin County?

Jahnsen: Yes. Well, it's all right. [Laughter]

Anyway, what happens is, radio was new then--we all had radios in our cars, and everybody had a number. When a call would come, "All K cars report for an assignment," now "K" meant kidnap cars, and mine was nine, so they called me the dog of the outfit.

Stein: Yes, canine. [Laughter]

Jahnsen: I was the K-9, see? [Laughter]

So when this happened, we got all K-cars assembled and report. No matter what they were doing, no matter where they were, this call would never go out, unless they had to-- We



ALAMEDA COUNTY KIDNAP SQUAD. DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE. OAKLAND. CALIF.

Left to Right

UPPER		MIDDLE	LOWER	
HENRY BRADOW Sergeant, San Leandro Police Dept.	WILLIAM MARSHALL Inspector, Oakland Police Dept.	OSCAR J. JAHNSEN Lieut. Insp. Dist. Atty. Office	JOHN F. LE DOUX Police Officer, San Leandro	ALBERT R. FROCK Sergeant, Berkeley Police Dept.
LUCIAN M. JEWELL Inspector, Oakland Police Dept.	JAMES A. GOODNIGHT Inspector, Oakland Police Dept.	CHESTER B. FLINT Insp. District Attorney's Office	FRED. HEERE Chief of Police, Piedmont	CLETUS L. HOWELL Vice-Insp., Berkeley Police Dept.
EUGENE F. MURPHY Inspector, Oakland Police Dept.	ALBIN P. OLSSON Lieut., Alameda Police Dept.	HARRY L. ADAMS Detective, Sheriff's Office	RALPH R. PIDGEON Inspector, Berkeley Police Dept.	GEORGE W. HANSON Inspector, Piedmont Police Dept.
		DOUGLASS G. WEBB Detective, Sheriff's Office	LLOYD R. WENDLAND Sergeant, Alameda Police Dept.	

Alameda County Kidnap Squad, 1935. Oscar Jahnsen is at extreme left, middle row.

Jahnsen: made tests on it, you see? No matter what case they were on they'd have to be located. Their local departments'd have to get them, and they cut them loose.

They all assembled at the district attorney's office, immediately, and were given instructions. Within one hour, I would say, or thereabouts--maybe from the time the kidnaping was reported, which would be two hours from the time it happened--in that period of time we were all assembled in the yard at San Quentin prison to go out, and we would work in all counties.

We had what was called the county-wide plan. The mutual aid plan was an off-shoot of this. It was joint-county, too, with Contra Costa County.

One day, to give you an illustration, we had a little girl that was picked up on her way home from school in San Leandro by some fellow in a car. And this man--somebody saw him pick the girl up. She was about seven or eight years old, nine years old. He took her in the car. She disappeared--she didn't come home. Her mother immediately notified the police.

Joe Proehler was chief of police, then, out there, and he immediately called up and asked for us, and got me on the phone. I immediately put out the call for all K-cars to assemble. This would be about three o'clock in the afternoon. By eight o'clock that night we didn't only have the girl back, but we had the man and the confession. The next morning the man plead guilty to kidnap and went to San Quentin prison by the next afternoon.

King: That's pretty fast work.

Jahnsen: We got the girl. This man was a syphilitic. He had the girl up back in the hills in Hayward, and was starting to fool with her. Fortunately we got a line that some farmer had seen this car stalled down the road, and he asked for some help. The farmer called in to report this fellow up there, and we had a line on it that way. We got the fellow and he confessed to picking the girl up and the whole thing.

A peculiar coincidence about that case: I had a barber named Ernie Meier who lived in Oakland; I lived on College Avenue and went to him. Ernie Meier's wife--it was her second marriage, to Ernie--this was her first husband. She told me a lot of things about the guy afterwards. The guy was just a

Jahnsen: no good son-of-a-gun, and if he'd have fooled with this girl it'd have been a terrible thing. But these guys go off their rocker. He could have murdered her, and she'd have disappeared. But in less than forty-eight hours this fellow was in San Quentin prison. This was the value of this organization. I said Earl Warren was a great organizer.

We also had the first police schools. [They] were set up in Alameda in the district attorney's office. Once a week the kidnap squad met. We would always bring in people from the outside, outside criminologists. We would bring in people that had a lot of information that they could give us on autopsies: doctors, surgeons.

King: Then you taught a course about this at U.C., didn't you?

Jahnsen: No, I taught the course on surveillance. This was one of my own, how to shadow people. I taught at San Jose and also UCLA at Los Angeles. It was an interesting course. The fellows would stay until seven or eight o'clock at night. [Laughter]

King: That would have been fun.

Jahnsen: I told them how to shadow people, and a lot of these things, you know. A lot of it's based on your own imagination, and so forth, what to do. I remember telling them how to enter an elevator. They wanted to know, "How do you follow the guy in the hotel if he gets in the elevator?"

Well, you have to anticipate. A lot of it's anticipation. You've got to be prepared to be able to anticipate the other fellow's moves. You have to know that the other fellow knows he's being followed. You must be assured of that. You must realize that this man--

King: That he's trying to elude it.

Jahnsen: Well, he's a criminal, he's suspicious. He's always looking, see? But you've got to brace him. You've got to take away his suspicions. Psychology is [what] a lot of it is.

When you go in the elevator you go right in with the man. Naturally the fellow's gonna say, "What floor?" or press the button, so you press the button ahead of him, ask for the floor ahead of him, see? You never want to ask for the floor above him, because he might walk up and meet you! [Laughter]

Jahnsen: The idea is to get off on the lower floor and know that he's above you. Then try to anticipate where he's going above you, see? Then, if anything should happen, go in, and if you spot him, you'd say, "By the way, do you know where the ABC coal company is?" Or, "Can you tell me where Mr. Smith's office is here?" You ask him, right at him. You brace him right on, you see?

That throws him off right away. Immediately you change his pattern of thought. His fear leaves him. He feels more or less confident. He's gonna say, "No, I really don't." You might see the office he's going into by doing this, see? Even if you get off with him, if you give him enough chance. He's going to watch you, and look around, and he'll go into an office, and you could say, "Oh, say, just a minute. Can you tell me where So-and-so's office is?"

The same way when you shadow a person, you always want to be ahead of them, never be behind them. He's always looking back. When you're walking along the street, always be in a position where you can use the benefit of the windows as a mirror. See where they're going, see? There's many little tricks about this.

King: We were all saying something about the prison board being kidnaped in Marin County, or at San Quentin? And the warden being kidnaped, and we never got that story, I guess.

Jahnsen: Yes. Well, the warden was kidnaped.

King: Who was that? Was that Clint Duffy?

Jahnsen: Oh, it was quite a long while ago.

Al Bagshaw, who was district attorney of Marin County at the time, was trying some cases out around Valley Ford. He heard the radio and the news. He ran into some of the sheriff's deputies, and they handed him a shotgun, and they'd had this fellow.

What they did, they came-- Have you been in Valley Ford?

King: Yes.

Jahnsen: Well, as you drive through, there's a place called Denucci's-- it's a little restaurant. The road goes around this place as it goes out to the town of Bodega Bay. One road goes to Bodega Bay, or you can go around the other way into Monte Rio. You could also turn in this road that goes into a ranch, and you'd go into a dead-end in the ranch.

They made the wrong turn and went into the ranch. They kept the prison board sitting in the back of a car while they kept the guns on them. They kept the gun on the driver, also.

They had forced the prison gate open, and they said they'd kill these guys (the prison board) if they didn't open the prison gates and let them out. So the San Quentin guards did. The prison board said to the gate tender, "Just let us out." So they let them out. They drove about forty or fifty miles before they drove into this dead-end. They couldn't back out, because they were getting cornered.

Just about this time one of these criminals went around a barn, and Al Bagshaw, who was a pretty sharp lawyer and a very fine man, had the shotgun. Somebody hollered, "Look out, Al, he's gonna shoot you." Al looked around the building and saw this person with a gun, and he upped with the shotgun and killed him. Shot him up pretty bad.

As he lay there, Al said, "Let's get him to the hospital. Let's get him to the hospital." One of the board members said, "Let the son-of-a-bitch die. What do you want to send him to the hospital for? What's he good for? That's too far to get him to the hospital. Let's get the rest of these guys."

Then the prison board came back. The others were later arrested and tried again for an escape, and so forth, and of course for the conspiracy. They did time there at the prison.

King: That's really almost the first attempt at coordination, the Alameda County kidnap squad?

Jahnsen: Well, this was one of the first. The Bay county peace officers association came in, and the California state--it used to be the sheriff's convention, the sheriff's association. Then this California state peace officers. Then they organized, with Warren's efforts, the Bay counties, the nine Bay counties, into an organization. Then, as a result, we were pretty well coordinated

Jahnsen: with Contra Costa County and Santa Clara County, but we had a joint working team with kidnaping.

This was when kidnaping was really going on. The FBI was the head of the squad, that is of the over-all picture, and I was the local head of the county squad, and our squads. We would call them out, but we only had certain grounds to call them out on, see? We were out on two or three, and we were very successful in the operation of the squad.

IN THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE

King: I'd like to ask you a couple of questions about the attorney general's office. We were talking about U.S. Webb at lunch, and how it was a kind of nothing office there--

Jahnsen: I was not too familiar with the operation of the attorney general's office, and had no reason to be, but I do know that Warren--

King: Were you an investigator for Warren, then? Didn't you go on as an investigator in the attorney general's office?

Jahnsen: Well, I became the chief special agent for Warren. At that time Henry Dietz, who now is in the district attorney's office over in San Mateo County, in the civil department, Henry Dietz was there. Dietz was a former special agent of the FBI, and Joe Scoales.

It happened to be that Webb, when he realized that Warren was taking over as, you might say, chief law enforcement officer of the state--something that Webb wasn't interested in--he didn't want this. But Warren wanted it. He felt that the law enforcement field should be coordinated. And it should be consolidated and it should have some head.

Each county was the head. Each sheriff was the head. They had no overall [coordination], see? They had the State Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation in Sacramento, but it was a cataloging agency. They didn't have any-- They had investigators, but they didn't amount to very much, you see? I told you about the investigation of the Butz boys coming down, and the kind of--

King: Yes.

Jahnsen: Well this fellow was just working for a department, you see? They'd have him go over-- And the attorney general in those days--they didn't have an appropriation. They got their money for operation expenses by sending a bill to the various departments.

King: That explains why the 1934 state constitutional amendment talks about a continuing appropriation for the attorney general's office being provided by the governor and the controller. I couldn't understand what that meant.

Jahnsen: Well, no--this could be a different thing now, what you're referring to. But a continuing appropriation would be that some of these offices didn't have the money to pay. In other words, let's say that the state government was set up in various departments, and each department had an appropriation, and so much was set aside for legal services. But they had to hire the attorney general, unless they got permission from the attorney general to hire special counsel. Then they would need money. If they owed the attorney general a lot of money--

King: That's right. You always pay the lawyer last!

Jahnsen: You see, they didn't get paid. So he might ask for an additional, or you might say supplemental, appropriation. But his appropriation was limited, see? This is the way it was set up originally, so Warren took all of that out. He wanted--and this was one of the things that turned Warren against Olson--he never would have ran against Olson, I'm satisfied he didn't want to be governor, except that Olson vetoed a \$114,000 appropriation that Warren had put in as attorney general, and he vetoed it, you see? He got it up to the governor and he vetoed it. We'd already bought automobiles-- I went out and bought cars for the investigators.

King: That was after the fight about the-- I was just reading this the other day in a very sympathetic book about Olson--civil defense council, though, isn't it?

Jahnsen: Well, this would have been, I'd say, 1942.

King: That's about right. This is in this volume by a man named

King: Burke.* He describes this as a final parting of the ways, that is, the fight in which Olson pocket-vetoes the appropriation for the attorney general's office.

Jahnsen: Well, this could have been it. Yes. He did this, he let it die, and we had no money. In the meantime, I had gone to the Ford people--Jimmy Pabst in Oakland, Weaver-Pabst--and made arrangements to buy cars, and had turned in cars.

We were operating with seized vehicles. [Laughter] If a vehicle was seized for a violation of the law, then the department of finance under Olson, which was Mr. [George] Killion at that time, who was president of the American President Lines later, and who is very active now and I think supporting Reagan! [He] had supported [Edmund] Brown. George Killion, who was director of finance, had the power to distribute these automobiles to various departments. We had a couple of old clunks! [Laughter]

We had more investigators then, and we needed-- We had a bill passed, too, that would give the attorney general police power, but this meant that we couldn't operate. We'd ride on a streetcar, or something else--it would just hamstring us.

I talked to George Killion in Mr. Pabst's office, and had Mr. Pabst get on the phone. And Pabst says, "How are you going to pay for them?" I says, "Well, finance will approve it; he said they would." I got Mr. Killion on the phone, and I told him who I was. I said, "I'm here about these automobiles and they want to be sure that--they'll take the old cars in, if they'll get the pink certificates for them, and get title to them. They want to make sure that it'll be paid." He says, "You give them the cars, and we'll pay for it."

So these were Mercury sedans that we got, I think, four Mercury sedans. Of course Killion was bound, then, even by phone call. It was in Pabst's office. So he gave us the cars, and they paid for those cars, but that was as much as we got. Got no gasoline for them. [Laughter]

*Robert E. Burke, Olson's New Deal for California, (Berkeley, 1953).

Jahnsen: Warren wouldn't have run--in fact he wanted to work with Olson. He said, "I would like to work with Olson, as I hoped that [Frank] Merriam would work with me." I think it was Merriam that would work with him, see? And he never could get the cooperation. Of course then you had a lot of liberals--you had George Creel, who was very active in the Democratic party, a writer, supporting Olson; and then you had many others--labor movements were supporting Olson.

Many of them were against Warren, of course, with the ship murder case. Olson had pardoned these guys, these ship-murderers that we convicted and sent to the penitentiary. He pardoned them and he left the witness--one of the witnesses--he left him stay in jail, see? A fellow named Wallace.

Stein: George Wallace.

Jahnsen: He left him in jail. Of course then the pressure was on Wallace when he was in there from these other goof-balls that were in the klink. They were putting the pressure on Wallace, trying to get him to change his story, but they couldn't change it. Of course, this was bad. It was a terrible thing for him to have done, because he did this for union support, but he did it for the left-wing group, see? At this time Harry Lundeberg was head of the sailor's union, you see, and Lundeberg was against these people. In fact Lundeberg and some of his people were very helpful to me.

King: You're really talking about the campaign for governor now, when Olson and Warren ran against each other?

Jahnsen: Yes.

King: I mean, these were the kinds of--

Jahnsen: Well, these are some of the reasons why Warren ran against him, see? Then Warren defeated him, and I remember when we went up there Olson had to appear as the outgoing governor at the time Warren was inaugurated, and we went up in the same elevator. His son was in the elevator. A lot of people had passed the word on to us that his son was going to kill Warren, see? I had to stay there with him all the time and be around with him in the same elevator.

Jahnsen: Olson went up and said to him, "Well, Earl, you don't know what a hell of a job you've taken over. You're really gonna get it. I'm damn glad you've got it!" [Laughter] He was a Mormon from Utah. I don't think he was a bad guy, but he was just pretty badly confused in politics.

King: Foot-in-mouth disease, I think he had.

Jahnsen: Yes, I think so. That's right. [Laughter]

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